

# YOUNG KLONDIKE

## STORIES OF A GOLD SEEKER

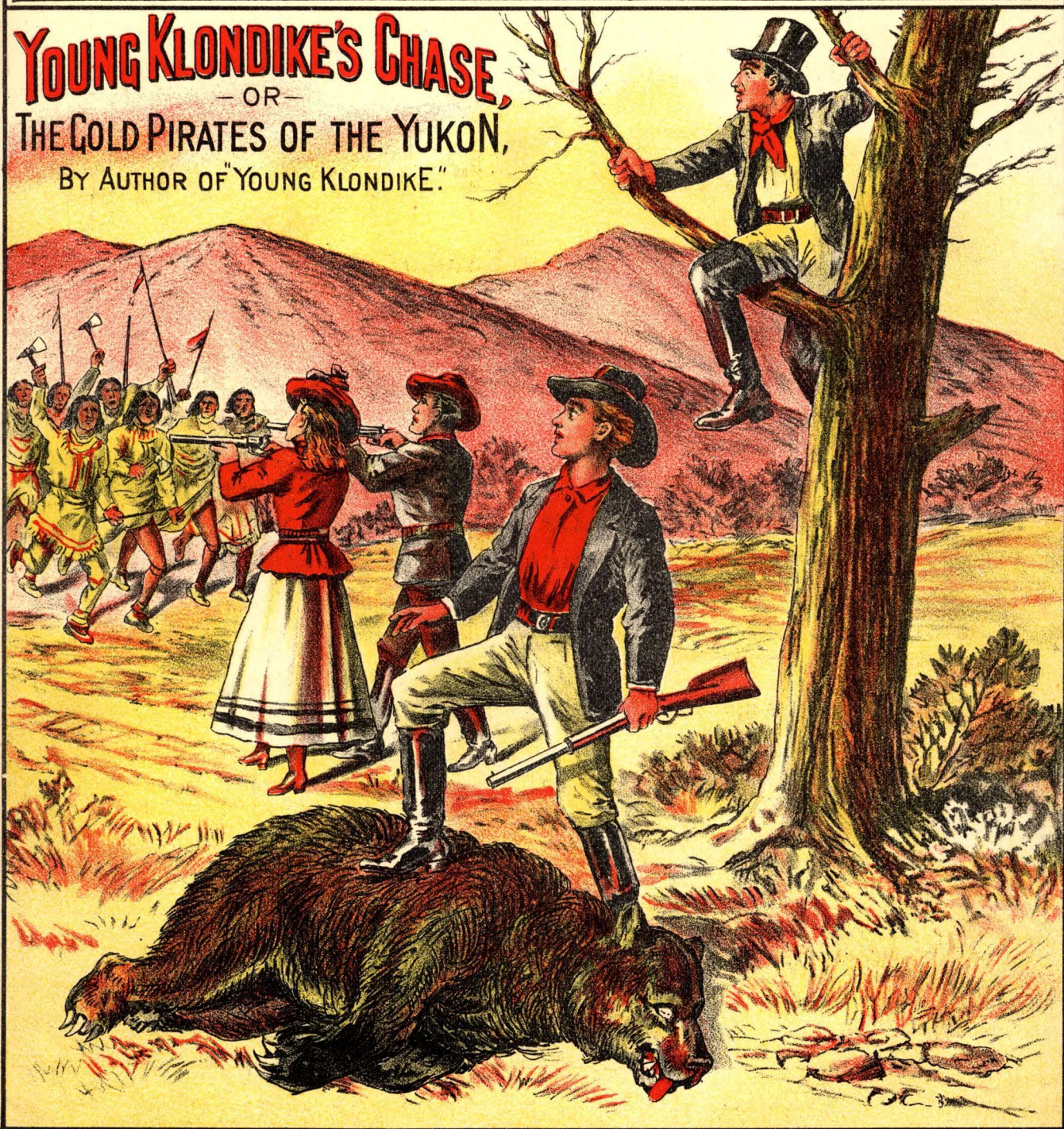
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### YOUNG KLONDIKE'S CHASE, — OR — THE GOLD PIRATES OF THE YUKON, BY AUTHOR OF "YOUNG KLONDIKE."



"Thunder! and my rifle is empty! Quick, Edith! Dick!" shouted Ned. As Young Klondike planted his foot on the dead bear, Edith and Dick fired at the approaching Indians.  
"Give 'em another round, Edith!" cried the Unknown, from his perch in the tree.



# YOUNG KLONDIKE.

⇒ Stories of a Gold Seeker. ⇐

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE MAN WHO WANTED TO BUY.

"WHAT do you think of her, Ned?"

"It strikes me, Dick, that she's a dandy, and for the Klondike about the finest little steamer there is going."

"That's what everyone says. You ought to have seen the crowd that was down here yesterday to have a look at her. I could have sold her twice over if I'd wanted to—that's a fact!"

Two young men stood in Beacraft's boat building yard at Dawson City, away up in the Alaskan gold country.

It was a pleasant afternoon in the late summer.

The giant mountain on the opposite side of the great Yukon River, which flows past Dawson City, was beginning to assume an autumnal coloring.

This added greatly to the picturesque beauty of the scene, which was wild and romantic to a degree.

Moored to the wharf was a small steamer, which had just been completed by Beacraft.

To some it may seem strange that such a trim little craft could be produced in this out-of-the-way corner of the world.

Yet it had been entirely constructed in Dawson City, with the exception of a certain portion of her engine.

Beacraft began building boats in Dawson long before the days of the great gold excitement.

He had built for prospectors, fur traders and others.

Most of his productions were very primitive, and never before had he turned out anything to compare with the Edith.

There was no reason why these two young men should not be the owners of the best boat ever built in Dawson City.

The one addressed as Ned was the famous Young Klondike, the millionaire miner of El Dorado Creek, who signed his name Edward Golden when he had occasion to write it in full.

Dick Luckey was his partner, and together they constituted the firm of Golden & Luckey.

They were not only the richest, but the most popular young men among the hundreds of miners on El Dorado Creek and along the Klondike river.

Their fame had extended all over Alaska and the British Klondike country.

It was no wonder, therefore, that everybody in Dawson City had flocked down to Beacraft's to see the Edith launched, which interesting ceremony had taken place the day before.

"Pity you were delayed, Ned, and could not have been here at the launching," remarked Dick.

"I was sorry, but it couldn't be helped. Edith was not feeling altogether well, and we could not start."

"Did Mrs. Colvin come down from Young Klondike with you?"

"Yes; she's with Edith at the hotel now; they'll be down before a great while. Of course the good soul wanted to be with Edith, when she heard that we proposed to make the run down to St. Michaels."

"We couldn't go without her."

"Certainly not. Edith wouldn't have been satisfied. We must never forget, Dick, that our luck began when we saved the girl from the sinking steamer on our voyage from Seattle to Juneau. Besides, Edith is a full partner in the firm of Golden & Luckey, and we have no right to refuse her if she wants to go."

"Speaking of going, let's go aboard and have a look at the steamer, Ned. Of course I saw it yesterday, but I shall enjoy seeing it again with you."

The boys then climbed aboard the steamer. Ned went into raptures over the cozy cabin, the complete



cooking arrangements in the galley, the very superior engine, etc.

While they were inspecting their new purchase, Beacraft, the builder, came aboard.

"Ah, Mr. Golden! Glad to see you. When did you get in town?" he asked.

"Came in about an hour ago," replied Ned.

"I was sorry you couldn't be here at the launching yesterday."

"So was I, but that was quite impossible."

"I hope you are pleased with the Edith, sir?"

"More than pleased, but you needn't 'sir' me. I'm one of the plain sort. I don't forget that I'm only a boy."

"I wish there were more boys in Dawson like you, then. I'd like to build a boat such as this every month."

"You'll build no more this season, I fancy, Mr. Beacraft," said Dick; "but next year some other lucky fellow will be pretty sure to give you an order with such a traveling advertisement of your skill as this."

"Oh, thank you—you flatter me," laughed the boat builder, bowing with much politeness.

"Not at all," said Ned. "You deserve all the praise we can bestow on the Edith, but while we won't flatter you we may as well pay you. Let's see, how much is the bill?"

"Oh, there is no hurry; no hurry, at all."

"But I'd rather pay now. I don't like to owe any one."

"I wish there were more like you, Mr. Golden. I'll make out a bill and hand it to you before you leave."

"Never mind about that if you've got the amount. A receipt will be all I want."

"The amount is \$4,300."

"That's quite satisfactory. I'll write you a check on the Branch Bank of British North America. I suppose you can handle that?"

"I'd like to handle your check for a million, Ned Golden," cried the boat builder, enthusiastically.

"I'm hardly ready for that," laughed Ned.

He produced his check book and filling out a blank for the required amount, handed it to Beacraft and took a receipt.

"Many thanks," said the boat builder. "Can't we have a little drink on this?"

"Thank you; I never drink."

"Perhaps Mr. Luckey—"

"Not I," said Dick. "Water or milk is good enough for me."

"How about tea and coffee?"

"Oh, we both indulge in coffee once in a while, that is, when we can get any that's fit to drink."

"When do you propose to start?"

"To-morrow morning," said Ned. "If we are going to put it through to St. Michaels the sooner we are on the move the better, I suppose."

"Decidedly so," replied Mr. Beacraft. "If it is not presuming too much, I'd like to give you a piece of advice."

"We are open to advice from anybody," replied Ned. "Don't hesitate to speak your mind."

"But I don't wish to be considered as interfering with your business."

"Say what you have got to say—we ain't the kind to take offense, are we, Dick?"

"Not at all," said Dick. "Go right ahead, Mr. Beacraft."

"Then I say don't go to St. Michaels. You'll get frozen in as sure as fate."

"Oh, but we must," cried Ned. "I've got important business there."

"You are taking big chances. The season is well advanced, and if the Yukon should happen to freeze, you would not be able to get back before spring, to say nothing of the chance of being frozen in along the river where you might starve or freeze to death. You two fellows are of far too much importance to us here in Dawson to make me feel pleasant about your taking such a risk."

But Ned and Dick laughed at the boat builder's fears, and a few moments later Mr. Beacraft was called ashore.

While the boys were still inspecting the minor points of the steamer, they saw a man coming down the wharf, who at once attracted their attention from the fact that he was just about the ugliest looking specimen of humanity they had ever laid eyes on.

He was a man apparently about forty years of age, long, lean and lank, with only one eye, and one ear gone and a badly pock-marked face.

"Great Scott! Who's that ugly looking duffer?" exclaimed Ned.

"I'll be blest if I'll ever tell you," said Dick. "He's ugly for fair, ain't he?"

"Well, now, he is. Say, Dick, he's coming this way."

"I'll be hanged if he isn't. Well, I suppose we can't refuse to let him look at the Edith."

"Certainly not. It won't do for us to put on airs."

"And make ourselves unpopular with everybody. No, not at all."

By this time the new-comer had reached the end of the wharf and he stopped and stared at the boys.

"Hello!" he called. "Which of you fellers is Young Klondike? He's the one I want to see."

"I answer to that name," replied Ned. "What did you want?"

"Can I come aboard?"

"Sure!"

"Well, now, that's nice of you! Heard tell of this steamer, and thought as how I'd kind of like to see her, but I was told you was such a tony chap that you wouldn't let no one aboard."

"Whoever told you that told you what wasn't true," replied Ned. "Come right up, sir. What's your name, if I may ask?"

"Well, of course you may ask. I ain't ashamed of my name. It's Pod Dunbury. I'm from Montreal."

"Wonder if they keep many of his kind in Mon-



treal?" whispered Dick, as the one-eyed man came up the steamer's side.

"Hush!" said Ned. "He might hear you. He's after something besides merely looking at the Edith. We want to speak him fair and try to find out what it is."

When the one-eyed man came on deck, he took a long look around.

"By gaul, this is a pretty snug craft," he said. "Neighbor, ain't that so?"

"We think so," replied Ned.

"That's what it is. May I look down below?"

"You may look anywhere. We've got no secrets here," declared Ned.

Now, this was very frank, but after all we are bound to say that it was not quite true.

There were secrets connected with the Edith.

In the first place, she had been built for a secret purpose.

In the next, she had a secret room on board, and one might look the steamer over a dozen times and not find it.

That room was built to contain gold, and it was certainly no part of Young Klondike's purpose to betray its existence to Mr. Pod Dunbury, so the tour of the steamer was made and everything inspected, but Mr. Dunbury did not see the secret room.

While the one-eyed man was looking over the steamer he said little, but when he came on deck again he began to talk.

"Say, young feller, where you from?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm from New York," answered Ned.

"And your partner?"

"He's from New York, too."

"So I've heard. What was your business there?"

"We were clerks."

"So! Hope you don't think I'm too inquisitive?"

"Not at all. There's nothing to be ashamed of in having been a clerk."

"No; that's so. They tell me you've had wonderful luck up here."

"We've done fairly well."

"Well, I heard that your success was great—great. They tell me Golden & Luckey are worth ten millions."

"Whoever told you that talks through his hat. We ain't worth anything of the sort."

"Well, now! That's the way these stories get around, ain't it?"

"Is there anything further you'd like to see, sir!" asked Ned, who was growing tired of the man.

"No," replied Mr. Dunbury. "I don't know as there is. In fact, I might as well say there isn't."

"Then I'll have to ask you to excuse us. We've got business to attend to."

"That's right. So have I. Came here on business, and I've been attending to it—I'm attending to it now."

"If it concerns us I wish you'd state it, so that we may close matters up!"

"Well, I will. Young Klondike, how would you like

to sell this steamer? I'm a man what wants to buy."

"We are not selling."

"Not for a price?"

"It would have to be a high price."

"What do you call a high price?"

"Who do you represent?"

"No matter."

"You don't want to buy it for yourself alone?"

"No matter, I tell yer. I'm prepared to buy the steamer and pay cash for her, if we can come to terms."

"We don't want to sell, do we, Dick?" said Ned, laughing.

He had no more idea of selling the Edith than of disposing of his rich claim up on Eldorado Creek.

"I guess not!" said Dick, emphatically.

"Pshaw!" said the man. "That's nonsense. Everybody wants to sell for a price; name yours for this craft."

"Twenty thousand dollars," said Ned, thinking that would settle it.

"I'll take it," said the man promptly.

"Stop!" cried Ned. "I didn't mean that."

"Didn't mean what?"

"That I'd sell the steamer."

"But you said so."

"No, I didn't. You asked me to name my price for the steamer and I said twenty thousand dollars, but I didn't say I'd be willing to sell her to you for any price."

"I can't help what you meant, young feller. That's what you said."

"I'm sorry if I deceived you, but I can't sell now."

"You've already sold. I claim the steamer on payment of the money."

Ned was in a dilemma.

Situated as he was, it would have been extremely foolish to have sold the Edith even for double the sum named.

The steamer had been built for a purpose, and with that purpose unfulfilled, Ned felt that he could not possibly part with her on any terms, and he now said so in the most emphatic way.

"Can't help it. Can't help it," said the man.

"You've sold the steamer and I claim it. If you don't stand up to your bargain it will be the worse for you—that's all."

"I won't talk any more about it," cried Ned.

"You can't have the Edith, Mr. Dunbury. You had best leave us now."

"I will have the steamer, and I'll leave when I get ready!" cried the one-eyed man, most offensively.

"I'm not going to be bullied by boys."

"What! What! Threats! By the Jumping Jeremiah, I've got my man at last!" cried a voice right behind him.

So taken up with their conversation had all three been that neither observed a man who had come on board the Edith a moment before.



But Mr. Pod Dunbury now became painfully aware of his presence.

For the man suddenly pounced upon him.

Clapping a hand on each shoulder, he shook Mr. Pod Dunbury till his teeth rattled.

"I arrest you in the name of the law!" he shouted. "Ye gods and little fishes! I've got my man at last!"

## CHAPTER II.

### THE LETTER IN THE SECRET ROOM.

Now, one might very naturally suppose that Young Klondike and Dick Luckey would be rather startled by this sudden interference in their business, and would be disposed to resent it as well.

Instead of that, they began to laugh.

The intruder cut rather a comical figure.

He was short and stout, and wore big cavalry boots and a battered hat of the variety commonly known as a "plug" tilted on the back of his head.

But Mr. Pod Dunbury did not laugh.

He seemed frightened out of his wits.

Pulling himself away from the stranger, he sprang over the steamer's side, and ran off up the wharf as fast as his legs could carry him, passing on the way a very pretty young girl and a stout motherly looking woman, who had at that moment entered the yard.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the man with the plug hat. "The old Unknown sent him to the right about face, didn't he, boys? What's the row? What was he trying to bulldoze you about? Was it into selling the Edith? Well, I guess that won't work! What would Edith say? By the Jumping Jeremiah! here she comes now!"

"Zed, you're a terror!" laughed Ned, speaking in such a way as to show that he was entirely familiar with the man.

And, indeed, he ought to have been, for the new-comer was also a member of the firm of Golden & Luckey; a sort of silent partner, for it would be impossible for any man to enter a co-partnership without revealing his name.

And this makes another bit of explanation necessary, after which our story shall go straight ahead without further introductions or explanations, which are tedious, to say the least.

The Unknown, as the new-comer called himself, claimed to be a detective, now in the Klondike country searching for some mysterious criminal who, up to date, had not been found.

Coming out from Seattle with Young Klondike and Dick, he had been with them ever since, sharing their fortunes and misfortunes, and yet during all their long and intimate acquaintance the boys had known him only as Zed, the Unknown, and had grown quite accustomed to his peculiarities, chief among which was the habit of suddenly pouncing upon some stranger, declaring that he was

"his man," and threatening him with arrest after the style just shown.

All this therefore, was an old story to Young Klondike and Dick, and having explained this the cause of their merriment will be understood.

"Who says I'm a terror?" exclaimed the detective, gravely. "I thought I had my man, Young Klondike! Ye gods and little fishes, it seems that I was mistaken again, but I don't see anything to laugh at in that."

"Mistaken for the hundreth time," said Dick; "but no matter, Zed, you helped us out of a nasty hole just the same."

"Which we got into through my own folly," declared Ned. "I had no sort of business even to listen to a proposition to sell the Edith, and that's just what I did."

"Sell the Edith! Never!" cried the detective. "What, sell the Edith after going to all the trouble to build her? Not much! Edith! Edith! Do you hear that? Here's Young Klondike talking about selling the steamer! Did you ever hear of such a thing in all your life?"

Edith Welton and Mrs. Colvin were just ready to come aboard then.

"What's all this, Ned?" laughed the girl. "Talking of selling my namesake? Really, I'm quite ashamed of you for even entertaining such an idea."

"I didn't actually entertain it," replied Ned, as he bent down and assisted Edith up over the steamer's side, Dick performing the same kind office for fat Mrs. Colvin.

"Who was the man? The one who ran by us along the wharf?"

"That was the one!" replied Ned. "The Unknown got hold of him and proclaimed him his man, with the usual results. Can you wonder that the poor fellow was scared to death?"

"Well, hardly. Who was he, anyhow? What is all this about?"

Ned explained.

But his explanation did not make matters much clearer to Edith.

"I can't understand this business at all," she said. "I didn't like the looks of that fellow and I like him less than ever, now that I've heard what you have to say."

"I didn't like it from the first," said the Unknown, dropping his trivial manner. "Young Klondike, there is something wrong with that man."

"I think so, too," said Dick. "He never meant to pay any twenty thousand dollars for the steamer—never in the world!"

"Let's drop him and have a look round," said Ned. "Here's Edith, who hasn't seen her namesake yet, and I daresay Mrs. Colvin is anxious to see the steamer, too."

"Indeed I am," said Mrs. Colvin. "From what I've seen of her already I should be ready to pronounce her a beauty—as she ought to be from her name."



"I fully agree with you, ma'am," said the Unknown.

"And I!" cried Ned.

"Same here," said Dick.

"Now, now, this won't do!" laughed Edith. "We may as well start up a mutual admiration society and have done with it. Come on and we'll look the steamer over, and if there is anything further to be said about that fellow Dunbury, it will be a good time to say it then."

Edith was charmed with the steamer, and Mrs. Colvin felt much the same way.

When they returned to the cabin after making the rounds, Edith asked for the secret room.

"Can't you imagine where it is?" asked Ned.

"No, I can't. I've had my eyes open, too! can't locate it at all."

"How about you, Zed?"

"I think I can find it."

"I don't believe you. And you, Dick?"

"I am sure I can't imagine where it is."

Now, among them all the location of the secret room was known to Young Klondike alone, and he naturally felt a little curious to see whether the detective had been shrewd enough to discover it or not.

"Where is it? Tell us where it is!" he cried.

"It's all very well to say you know, but prove it."

"I can," said the Unknown, emphatically.

"Then do it; but stop! Has anybody told you?"

"Not a soul."

"Nobody is supposed to know but myself, Mr. Bearcraft and the man who helped him build it. I should be more than surprised if you were able to find it, Zed."

"Then, dear boy, I'm ready to more than surprise you, for the secret room is here."

There was a handsome mirror hanging against the wall on one side of the cabin.

The detective stepped over to it and tapped the glass.

Ned showed his surprise in his face.

"I've got to admit that's where it is," he said.

"Of course! I knew it!" laughed the detective.

"How?"

"Judged by the thickness of the partition. I know that this cabin does not go quite to the engine-room. I got on to all that."

"Open the door, Zed, and show us the room. I'm just dying to see it!" cried Edith.

"Ah! I didn't promise to do that," chuckled the detective. "I'll try, though."

He did try and he failed.

In spite of the most careful search the Unknown was unable to locate the fastening which controlled the door of the secret room.

But Ned pressed a bit of the moulding in the frame of the mirror and the door was open in an instant.

The whole mirror flew back disclosing a small apartment between the cabin and the engine-room, just as the Unknown had foretold.

"So that's where our gold is to be stored, is it?" asked Edith.

"That's the place," replied Ned. "You know my idea. We've got altogether too much gold to make it safe to keep it here in Dawson City. In fact, the bank refuses to accept the risk of taking charge of any more, and nothing remains but for us to look out for it ourselves."

"For which reason, hearing of a steamer which is to leave St. Michaels at the mouth of the Yukon this day three weeks, we have determined to make the run down the river and turn over the gold to be taken to San Francisco," said the Unknown. "That, I believe, is about the size of the case."

"It's just the size of it," said Ned. "That's exactly what we are going to do."

Now, Ned spoke as though it was the simplest thing in the world to ship gold out of Dawson City.

Actually the very reverse was the case.

Dawson is over six hundred miles from the sea-coast, on the bank of the mighty Yukon, a river larger than the Mississippi, it is believed, although it has not as yet been explored its entire length.

During the summer season, when the river is open, steamers are constantly plying up and down the river between St. Michaels and Dawson, a distance of between eight and nine hundred miles.

Most of the gold is thus shipped, but not a little goes overland, via the terrible Chilkoot Pass route to Dyea and Juneau.

In either case it is dangerous work.

Lurking along the Yukon are the gold pirates; a gang of desperadoes ever on the lookout for plunder.

Any small craft supposed to carry gold is in danger until pretty well down the Yukon.

But the river route is preferable, for thieves and crooks abound in the land route just the same.

In the winter all these people are obliged to seek shelter either at Dawson City or in Juneau.

In many instances they are well enough known and their nefarious business perfectly understood, but such is their influence that no one dares to say a word against them.

Young Klondike knew all about the gold pirates, and understood perfectly the risk he ran in attempting the journey down the Yukon with a load of nuggets and dust; hence he had prepared the secret room in which to conceal his treasures, and followed by his friends, he now entered it and began showing them how secure it was.

"You see they would have a hard job to break in here," he said to Edith. "It is all plated with iron, and if Zed could not find the spring I don't believe the gold pirates could, even if we were unfortunate enough to be captured by them, which I hardly think will be the case."

"I'll bet you it won't!" cried the Unknown. "Just let them try to board us! I've got an old cutlass which I bought expressly for that work. The first man who dares show himself over the Edith's side, off goes his head!"



"Listen to the valiant Zed!" laughed Edith. "But what's this, Ned; a love letter or a dun?"

Edith stooped and picked up a sealed letter from the floor, over in one corner of the secret room.

"What sharp eyes you've got!" cried Ned. "I didn't see that. To talk of love letters in connection with me is all nonsense—and it can't be a dun, for I don't owe a cent in the world."

"It's addressed to Young Klondike, all right enough, though," said the Unknown, looking over Edith's shoulder.

Ned was disturbed.

"This means that somebody has been here in the secret room since the steamer was finished!" he exclaimed.

"I don't know as it does," said Dick. "What's the matter with Beacraft or some of his workmen having left the letter in here?"

"What's the matter with Young Klondike's opening it and seeing what there is inside?" said Edith. "Come, Ned. Here's your letter. Too much talk here. Let's see what it's all about."

Ned opened the letter, his face assuming a puzzled expression as he read.

"I can't understand this at all!" he exclaimed.

"Read it, read it!" cried Dick.

"It's startling enough, I'll promise you. Here goes."

He read as follows:

"MR. YOUNG KLONDIKE.—Deer sur, the gold pirates of the Yukon is dead onter yer. They know this here room—they mean to go for yer. Look out or you'll get killed. If you put the gold in here you'll be a fool. Yere frend and well wisher,

"JACK NOBODY."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE EDITH SAILS.

"Is the gold all aboard?"

"Every ounce of it."

"In the secret room? Did you put it there?"

"Where else would I put it?"

"But the letter?"

"Pshaw! The letter does not scare me. It will take more than that letter to make me alter my plans. What did you learn up in town?"

The Unknown, whom Young Klondike was addressing, tilted his tall hat further back on his head and leaned over the rail of the Edith.

All was bustle on the little steamer then.

It was an hour after midnight, and the Edith was getting ready to sail.

"Why, dear boy, I didn't learn much," replied the detective in answer to Ned Golden's question, "but this much I did find out, your Pod Dunbury is not known here in Dawson City at all."

"Just as I expected. This business has all been mere bluff to scare us."

"Not altogether, Young Klondike; it means more than that."

"What more?"

"It means that the gold pirates of the Yukon have caught on to our plans, and that means trouble."

"Let it come. We are ready. It ain't the first time the sharks of Dawson City have tried to down us. I ain't going to show the white feather now."

It was now nearly midnight. According to the arrangements made, Young Klondike meant to start the Edith down the Yukon at one o'clock.

This strange hour had been selected in order to keep the sailing as quiet as possible.

A competent river captain had been engaged, a man by the name of Collamore, who was supposed to know every rock and shoal in the river all the way to its mouth.

Besides Captain Collamore there was Joe Judson, the engineer, and two deck hands.

The fewer people the better, Ned decided, and he felt very confident of being able to manage the Edith with this small crew.

The gold had been brought down from the bank in a covered wagon and carefully stored in the secret room by Ned and Dick, before either captain or crew came aboard.

Ned wanted to keep the matter a profound secret, but there was the letter to bother him. It was hard to say who knew of the existence of the secret room, and who did not, but in spite of the gloomy predictions of the Unknown he refused to be alarmed.

While they were still talking Captain Collamore and Dick came up.

They had been making a tour of inspection to see if everything was right on board the steamer, and so reported.

"Nothing to hinder us from starting on time, then, captain?" asked Ned.

"Nothing at all," replied the captain. "We'll have everything in shape for you by one o'clock. Joe Judson reports the engine in good working order. It only remains for you to give the word to start."

"Which will be given on time," replied Ned. "Mr. Luckey and I will go up to the Victoria Hotel for Miss Welton and Mrs. Colvin, and then we will be on the move."

"How long do you expect to be gone?" asked Captain Collamore, carelessly.

"Not beyond the hour certainly, and we may be back in half an hour's time."

"We'll be all ready, sir. Is Mister—Mister—by the way, I don't know your name, sir."

Captain Collamore turned to the Unknown.

"No, by the way, I don't think you do," chuckled the detective. "Introduce me, Ned."

"Introduce yourself," said Ned. There were times when it annoyed him excessively to be ignorant of the Unknown's name.

"Oh, all right. I'd just as soon. My name is John Jacob Astor. Captain Collamore, Mr. Astor—Mr.



Astor, Captain Collamore. There. Now we are introduced."

"Come, now. Do you intend this for a joke?" demanded the captain, looking puzzled, as well he might be.

"No joke at all. Dead earnest. What were you going to ask?"

"If you were going up to the hotel, too."

"No, sir. I'm going to stay right here."

"That's all I want to know," growled the captain, and he turned on his heel and walked away.

"You've made an enemy of that man, Zed," said Young Klondike. "Why will you do it?"

"He needs an enemy," whispered the detective. "I don't like your Captain Collar-me—I'll stay here ready to collar him if he tries any of his tricks."

"Pshaw! You are always croaking," retorted Ned.

Soon after he and Dick went up to the Victoria for Edith and Mrs. Colvin.

Young Klondike did not hurry himself.

He felt perfectly secure.

Trouble might come from the gold pirates after they were once started, but Ned never dreamed of trouble now.

As usual, Mrs. Colvin was not ready, and there was a long delay waiting for the good woman to get her things together.

As there was considerable baggage to be carried, Ned had engaged the antiquated vehicle which did duty as a hack in Dawson, to convey them to the wharf.

Edith was decidedly nervous—something very unusual for her.

All the way to Beacraft's ship-yard, she kept talking about the letter found in the secret room.

"Good Heavens, Edith! I don't know that I want to go, if we are all going to have our throats cut by these gold pirates!" exclaimed Mrs. Colvin.

"We ain't," put in Ned. "Dear me, what's the matter with everybody? First, it's the Unknown, then it's you, Edith. I say it's time enough to bid trouble good-morning when you meet it, and—what in thunder, Dick! What's the matter with you?"

The hack had just entered the ship-yard. Dick thrust his head out of the window and drew it back with a startled cry:

"The Edith! The Edith!" he gasped. "We met trouble now for fair!"

"And what's the matter with the Edith?" cried Ned, trying to get a look.

"She's gone!"

"Gone!"

"Yes!"

"Impossible!"

"Look for yourself!"

"Heavens, it's so! The Edith has sailed and we are left!"

"And all our gold gone with her!" groaned Young Klondike.

There was silence in the hack then.

It was startling—terribly so.

In a few moments they were at the end of the wharf and all hands made quick work getting out of the hack.

The steamer's place was deserted.

Out in the river Ned could see the Edith.

She was just rounding the point of the mountain.

There was not a soul around to explain what it all meant.

"It's the gold pirates of the Yukon!" groaned Dick. "This is their work."

"And what about Zed? Has he been killed?" asked Edith.

"He's either dead or a prisoner!" exclaimed Ned.

"Or turned traitor," ventured Dick.

"Never!" cried Ned. "I'll bet on Zed every time. Who warned us? It's all my fault—I wouldn't listen; but we won't waste a moment. We've got to chase the Edith and we've got to take her if we have to make the nine hundred mile run to the mouth of the river. We must act!"

Now, when Young Klondike talked like this he meant business.

It was possible to down Ned Golden—it is possible to down any man, but Ned was a hard one to keep down.

"We three will go in the launch!" he declared.

"Mrs. Colvin, you'll have to stay behind and look to the baggage. Come, Dick! Come, Edith! We start now!"

It seemed madness to talk of going down the Yukon river for an indefinite distance in a naphtha launch.

Worse still for Young Klondike's plans, the Edith could outsail the launch, and the case looked quite hopeless to everyone but Ned.

But Ned absolutely refused to view it that way.

"They ain't going to St. Michaels!" he declared.

"They haven't any notion of it. Somewhere between here and Fort Cudahy the gold pirates have their hold-out. That's where we shall overhaul the Edith, and then there's always the chance of Zed's springing some trick on them to stop the steamer. I'll bet you what you like he's alive, and I'll bet he'll do it! In fact, I place more reliance in Zed than in the launch."

But for all that the launch was a good one, and large enough to make it quite safe to undertake the chase.

Young Klondike had purchased it in San Francisco the previous spring to run up and down from his El Dorado Creek diggings.

Although small, it was a craft to be relied on if one knew how to work it, and this Ned could do as well as any man alive.

Bidding Mrs. Colvin good-by, Ned, Dick and Edith hurried to the place where the launch had been left, carrying with them their rifles, ammunition and such provisions as they could.

They met nobody by the way, and were able to get the launch ready in a surprisingly short time.



Then Ned started the engine going, and off they went down the Yukon under the stars.

It was the beginning of a long chase, and one destined to lead to many adventures which shall now be told.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE FIGHT IN FALSE COVE.

"NED, do you know you are a wonderful fellow!"

"What's the matter, Dick? What made you break out like that? Just about now I'm thinking that I'm a wonderful big fool."

It was almost dawn; the launch was still plowing her way down the Yukon river, moving amid scenery which cannot in all the world be excelled for grandeur.

Edith was asleep in the little cabin, and Ned and Dick, never thinking of such a thing as sleep, were driving forward in the almost vain hope of coming in sight of the stolen steamer, when Dick suddenly blurted out his complimentary remark.

"Who says anything is the matter more than has been," he replied. "What I was thinking of is the promptness and decision with which you act."

Ned laughed.

"I wish I could do like you," continued Dick. "There's absolutely no such thing as keeping you down."

"Pshaw! I don't know that I'm any different from anybody else in that respect."

"Oh, yes, you are. If I had relied on my own judgment I should never have had the courage to come up here to the Klondike."

"Then we'd never have had the chance to lose half a million; that's one thing sure."

"That's just it. Now we lose half a million, but it don't seem to bother you a bit."

"Why should it? We've got as much more in actual gold besides our claims, and I tell you what it is, Dick Luckey, it would take big money to buy my interest in them, but there's no use in complimenting me. I don't deserve it. This trouble is actually all my fault."

"If it is, you are doing your best to make good that fault, but I don't admit it. I say you are not to be blamed. We were all ready. We had to start, there was no other course."

"That's the way I looked at it."

"There was no other way to look at it. To have hung back would have been to expose our plans to everybody, and that wouldn't have answered at all. But say, Ned, there's something in the shape of a steamer ahead of us. Don't you hear?"

Ned was just thinking that the curious noise he heard was the puffing of steam.

The boys listened.

The sounds grew louder.

They seemed to come from around a point of land at no great distance away.

"Can it be the Edith?" questioned Dick.

"It's much more likely to be some steamer coming up the river," replied Ned.

"Almost as important."

"I agree with you."

"We may get news of the Edith."

"Exactly."

"Ned, who recommended Captain Collamore to you?"

"Oh, I heard of him through a man on the Exchange. He has certainly had a good reputation until now."

"Well, he didn't deserve it then; he is a crook, sure."

"Not a doubt of it. Heavens! I only hope he hasn't killed Zed. That's what's worrying me just about now."

"It would break us all up to lose him, odd stick as he is."

"That's what! There comes the steamer! It's a strange craft to me."

The sun had just risen, and its first beams struck upon a small propeller with low, black hull and raking masts.

It was one of the many old tubs hastily fitted out at San Francisco, to carry gold hunters to the Klondike.

Early as was the hour her decks were crowded with men, all anxious to see every inch of this land of gold.

Ned so-headed the launch as to bring them near to the steamer.

They attracted general attention; the passengers crowded to the rail to look at them.

"Give them the hail, Dick!" said Ned.

"Hello! Hello!" yelled Dick, whose voice was shrill and penetrating.

The miners waved their hats and shouted back.

This was not what the boys wanted, and Dick called again.

"Hello! Is the captain aboard?" he yelled.

A man wearing a uniform came to the rail in a moment.

"Hello, the launch!" he shouted. "What do you want, boys?"

"Did you pass a little steamer going down the river?" yelled Dick.

"We passed one about an hour ago—yes. The Edith, of Dawson City."

"That's her. We want to overhaul her. You're sure it's an hour, cap?"

"That's about it."

"How fast was she going?"

"Going! She wasn't going at all! She was at anchor in a cove. False Cove, I make it on my chart."

"Hooray!" cried Ned. "Bully for you, cap. You've told us just what we want to know."

"Glad of it!" shouted the captain. "How's things in Dawson?"

"Booming!" cried Dick.

"And up to the diggings?"



"Booming like everything. How many passengers have you got aboard?"

"Hundred and eighty."

"Send 'em up Eldorado Creek—that's the place for them. They can get all the work they want up there," shouted Ned.

It was getting difficult to make themselves heard, for they had already passed the steamer.

On they flew.

Soon the steamer was lost around the bend in the river.

Hope had come to Ned and Dick. They began to feel that there was a chance for them yet.

The shouting had awakened Edith, and she now came out of the cabin to hear the news.

"Probably False Cove is the hang-out of the gold pirates," she said. "Of course they can't hope to hold the steamer. More than likely we shall find her abandoned, boys."

"What I'm hoping is that they don't get on to the secret room," said Ned.

"Then you may keep on hoping indefinitely," said Dick. "There's no such good luck. Those scoundrels will tear the steamer all to pieces before they give it up."

"We may as well get the rifles all ready," said Edith. "If there's going to be a fight, we must be prepared."

There is nothing like taking things in time, certainly, but they had plenty of time to prepare.

A full hour was to pass before they came in sight of the Edith.

When they at last saw her they were wholly unprepared.

Ned had moved over to the south side of the river, and was creeping along under the shadow of the mountains.

They had passed many coves, thinking that each was the one they sought, when all once, passing round a wooded point, there lay the Edith between two hills. This was False Cove, and it had so little depth that it was scarcely worthy of being called a cove at all.

"Heavens! There she is!" cried Ned, suddenly reversing his engine.

But it was too late to prevent being seen.

There was a man standing at the bow of the steamer.

He wore a tall hat on the back of his head and big cavalry boots.

It was the Unknown.

As he caught sight of the launch he threw up both hands and ran back along the deck.

The gesture seemed intended to warn the boys back.

At least, Ned took it to mean that, and he had the launch around the point and out of sight in a jiffy.

Here they stopped and waited expecting to hear some sound from the steamer, but none came.

"What's to be done?" questioned Dick, in great

excitement. "Here we are up with her. What's to be done next?"

"That remains to be seen," replied Ned.

"They must have seen us."

"Zed saw us—that's certain."

"Of course he did, but I didn't see any one else on deck."

"Nor did I, yet it can't be that he's the only person on board."

"Oh, no, certainly not. It can't be that," said Edith. "I think we shall hear from him if we wait a minute. That's what I took his gesture to mean."

"Suppose we land and sneak round the point through the woods?" suggested Ned. "We could get a sight of them so and find out what they are about."

"I don't see any objection to your going," said Edith; "but one of us ought to remain here with the launch."

"I'll stay," said Dick; "you and Edith go, Ned."

"Why not let me stay?" said Edith. "I know that you two want to go together."

"No; you're the best shot," replied Dick, "and I can manage the launch where you can't. I think you ought to go."

"He's right," said Ned. "Come on, Edith, we'll make a move."

Ned jumped ashore and helped Edith out of the launch.

Shouldering their rifles they started around the point through the scrub cedars.

It was no great distance to a place where they could get a sight of the cove.

The steamer lay as they had last seen her.

There was not a soul on deck except the Unknown, who was pacing up and down as uneasy as a tiger in a cage.

"Why, Zed is all alone there, sure," breathed Edith. "Can everybody have gone? What does it all mean?"

"I've a great mind to hail him and find out," said Ned.

"No, no!"

"But we ought to know."

"Don't run any such risk. Perhaps we could signal him. Look! He's trying to let down the boat."

Suddenly the Unknown had paused in his walk before one of the Edith's life boats.

He seemed to be examining the tackle which held it suspended to the davits.

Then all at once he gave a gesture of despair and appeared to give it up.

"He'll never get that boat down, if that's what he's after," declared Ned. "He doesn't know any more about a ship's tackle than a crow. I must go over and help him off somehow. Edith, you stay here and watch."

"Ned, are you mad?"

"Not at all. I'm going to act, though. I must know what all this means."

"You shan't go!"



"But I will! I don't mind a wetting. I can do it. If worse comes to worse, I can swim back under water. I've done double the distance many a time."

It was the old story. Young Klondike had made up his mind, and Edith knew that it would be quite useless to try to stop him; but it was a most daring undertaking for all that.

Ned threw off his coat, hat and shoes, and stepped out from among the trees in full view of the steamer.

Instantly the Unknown caught sight of him, and with excited gestures, waved him back.

Ned shook his head and pointed to the steamer.

The Unknown shook his and pointed to the shore.

"Don't do it! Don't do it!" pleaded Edith. "You see what Zed means. He knows the terrible risk you run. For my sake, Ned, don't go."

"I'd do a good deal for your sake, Edith, but I'm going just the same."

Edith said no more, for she knew it was no use.

Without the least hesitation Ned plunged into the icy water.

The Unknown saw him do it and threw up his hands as much as to say:

"Just like him! There's no use trying to stop Ned."

At the same instant Edith saw Captain Collamore appear on deck.

She dropped down behind a rock, and watched.

The captain hurried up to the Unknown and excited words seemed to pass between them.

Then the captain disappeared below again, leaving the Unknown on deck.

Meanwhile, Ned had come to the surface.

He was swimming low in the water.

A few bold strokes brought him to the steamer.

The Unknown, who was watching him, leaned over the rail and called down:

"For Heaven's sake, dear boy, what would you do? It is madness to come here."

"How many, Zed?" Ned called out.

"Six!"

"Gold pirates?"

"Yes."

"The captain is in with them?"

"Yes, and the engineer, too. Your man, Pod Dunbury, is here besides."

"Have they found the gold?"

"Not yet. They are looking for it now. Oh, go back, Ned! Go back! They may hear us. We are lost if they do. Some of them are liable to come up on deck any time."

"I won't go back without you, Zed."

"Oh, I could never swim it—never."

"Can't you swim at all?"

"Just a little. Ever so little. They captured me, Ned, and I made out to chime in with them. Where's Dick?"

"Around the point in the launch. Can nothing be done?"

"Nothing, now. If they stay here till dark we might, though."

"But will they?"

"I can't say. They talk of going down the river to St. Michaels if they find the gold."

"Have they any idea where it is?"

"Not the least. They are looking in the hold now. They don't seem to suspect the cabin at all, but I found out who wrote the letter, though."

"Who?"

"One of Beacraft's men. He saw a fellow snooping around just as they were finishing off the secret room. The man was a friend of his and he didn't like to do anything, so he wrote the letter, but the skunk never gave the secret away."

"Why?"

"Because he was soon past speaking. He was shot in a row in Terry Nolan's saloon that night."

"Who was telling you all this?"

"Captain Collamore."

"You seem to be right in with the captain."

"He thinks I'm all right. I've been doing my best, Ned. It was either that or get killed."

"You were wise, as you always are, Zed. Drop me a line now; I'm coming aboard."

"Don't be a lunatic, dear boy. Get back just as quick as ever you can!"

"Not without you."

"You can't get me."

"I can lower the boat; we can go in that."

"Think of the awful risk! I should die if you lost your life trying to save mine."

"Don't you fret about that. I ain't going to lose my life, but every second we spend talking makes the risk greater."

"Go back, Ned, go back!"

"Will you throw down that line, Zed, or shall I have to try to climb up over the bows?"

"No, no, no! They'd see you sure, then."

"Throw the line, or I'll take the risk."

"You're the same old six-pence, bound to have your own way or bust!"

And as usual Ned had his way.

The Unknown threw down the line.

Ned, who all this time had been treading water, caught it and went up over the Edith's side as nimbly as a cat.

"I don't scare for a cent," he said. "This is our boat, and I guess I have a right to it."

"I guess you have, if anybody has, but that don't make the risk any the less," whispered the Unknown.

There was no more talking done then.

Ned had the boat loose in a moment.

"Get in," he whispered to the detective. "I'll let you down."

"Hark! Somebody is coming. Leave me, Ned! Jump overboard and save yourself. Oh, I tell you they are a tough gang!"

Ned's answer was to push the Unknown into the boat.

Instantly he let it drop.

None too soon!



Captain Collamore came out on deck a second later.

But in that second Ned had made a dive over the Edith's rail.

"Hello, you! Hello, John Jacob Astor! Where the dogs are you?" the captain roared.

Just then Ned was scrambling into the boat, the Unknown lending him a hand.

"What in thunder shall we do?" he whispered.

"If he looks over the rail, we are goners!"

"Oh, if Edith would only shoot him!" gasped Ned, whipping out his knife and cutting the boat free.

He looked toward the shore, but could see nothing of Edith.

The distance was so short, and yet the danger of covering it in that open boat was so great!

"Have you got your revolver, Zed?" Ned breathed.

"No; they took it away from me—they don't altogether trust me, of course."

"Take mine out of my pocket, and be ready to shoot him if he shows fight."

"I'll do that with the utmost pleasure, and you?"

"I'm going to pull ashore."

Ned caught up the oars, and the detective possessed himself of the revolver.

Meanwhile, Captain Collamore was charging around the deck, calling out for the Unknown.

All at once he caught sight of the boat.

"Thunder and guns! What's all this?" he roared.

"Young Klondike himself and my man!"

"You're my man now!" bawled the Unknown.

Up went his revolver.

He fired, and so did the captain.

Both shots missed their mark.

Captain Collamore yelled for his men and dodged down out of sight.

Up they tumbled, and the captain excitedly pointed to the boat, now half way to the shore.

"It's Young Klondike! It's Young Klondike! Shoot him down!" he shouted. "I haven't got another shot left!"

Then it was rifles and not revolvers.

Ned and the Unknown dropped low in the boat, the shots whizzing harmlessly over their heads.

"Again! Hit 'em again!" roared the captain.

He seized Pod Dunbury's rifle then and fired himself.

But it was his last effort.

Suddenly a shot rang out from the shore.

It was followed by another and another.

There stood Edith beside the rock, calmly firing.

Her first shot took the captain in the arm and he dropped the rifle with a yell and fell back.

The next did the business for Pod Dunbury.

He got it in the left shoulder, and had an ugly wound to nurse after that.

As for the rest of Edith's shots it is hard to say what became of them.

In a moment the men on the steamer stopped firing.

It was no use to keep it up.

Already the boat had made the bank.

Ned and the Unknown scrambled out.

"Good for you, Edith! You've saved our lives!" panted the detective.

Ned caught up his rifle and his clothes.

Then all plunged into the woods and ran over to the launch, just in time to prevent Dick from coming around to take a hand in the fight.

## CHAPTER V.

### ON THE CHASE AGAIN.

"WHAT in the world have you been doing? You've captured the Unknown!" cried Dick, as they came panting up to the launch.

"That's what! I'm captured! Captured! that's the word!" cried the detective. "And I want you to understand there never was a man more willing to be captured than your humble servant. Oh, boys, I've suffered agonies this night."

"Tell your story by and by, but tell us what to do right now," broke in Ned; "if there's any sort of show to get back the Edith we want to be at it at once."

"There isn't," said the detective, gloomily. "There's no show at all. I wish I could encourage you, but I can't."

"What are we to do? Stay here, and let those infernal pirates rob us?"

"Watch and wait."

"A very good motto for a copy book, but it cuts no ice with me!" cried Ned, excitedly. "I must do something or bust."

"Then you'll have to bust, dear boy, if you expect me to advise you, for I can't."

"Listen!" cried Edith. "They are starting the steamer away, ain't they? Isn't that what the sounds mean?"

All listened.

They could hear the steamer's propeller grinding distinctly enough.

"That's what it is," said the Unknown. "There's no help for it now; nothing in the world to do but to take up the chase."

The words were scarcely spoken when the Edith came in sight round the point.

Captain Collamore was at the wheel, showing that he was not so badly wounded as not to be able to attend to business.

"Lay low! We'll be apt to pick up a few shots when they see us!" the Unknown cried.

There was no use trying to hide the launch, of course, but all hands dropped down among the bushes.

It seemed to be a needless precaution, for no shots were fired.

The men on the Edith were all on deck and looking at the launch, though, and there is no telling what they might have done if Young Klondike's party had been in sight.



As it was, Captain Collamore turned the Edith down the Yukon, and away they went at full speed.

Ten minutes later and the launch was following again.

Young Klondike's chase, hopeless as it seemed, had been renewed.

"We've got to keep going," Ned declared. "There's no telling what turn affairs may take in our favor; they may take a notion to stop again."

By this time the Unknown had explained the whole situation as far as he knew it.

The capture of the steamer had been a complete surprise to him, and before he knew what was going on he was a prisoner.

Shrewdly pretending to fall in with the rascally schemes of the gold pirates, the detective had escaped death and retained the freedom of the steamer.

"But I don't believe they trusted me," he declared. "They thought that I knew where the secret room was, and that is why they left me alone. Young Klondike, you saved my life, sure. There ain't the least doubt that they would have killed me in the end."

"What did they stop there in the cove for?" asked Edith. "I haven't heard you explain that, Zed."

"They were expecting others of their party down in an old steamer from Dawson. Our gold is only a part of what they are after. The regular steamer, which leaves Dawson to-day, carries a million at least, and some say two. They mean to capture her if they can."

"What steamer is it?" asked Dick.

"The Gold Queen, of Seattle."

"Have they got force enough to capture a steamer like the Gold Queen?" asked Ned.

"Twenty men are to meet them below Fort Cudahy at some place I couldn't find out. Oh, I tell you they are a strong band! There is no use expecting to get any help to fight them, either. They have everybody along the river terrorized, and whatever we are to do against them we've got to do ourselves."

They talked it all over as the little launch sped on.

There seemed to be nothing to do but to continue the chase and take chances.

At the rate they were going they were able to keep the Edith in sight, and no more.

All that day and through the night the chase continued.

Forty Mile was passed, and Fort Cudahy was passed, but still no change in the situation came.

As one can readily imagine, Young Klondike and his friends were anything but comfortable.

The terrible strain of being imprisoned in the little launch, was beginning to tell on them all, and Edith was suffering more than the rest.

"It won't do; we shall have to give it up," said Ned, just before the second day dawned. "If we can't see our way out of this pretty quick, the best thing we can do is to return to Forty Mile and try to get a steamer. Then we can run on down the river and see what can be done."

Next to Dawson City, Forty Mile is the most important town in the Yukon.

Beyond lies Circle City, and beyond that all is a wilderness.

"If they take us past Circle City, it would be mere suicide to think of continuing so," said Dick.

"I tell you what, boys, I've let you do all the talking, but now I'm going to speak," broke in the Unknown.

"Fire away," said Ned.

"We are only too anxious to hear you," added Dick.

"An idea has occurred to me," continued the Unknown. "The other steamer will soon be along—it must. Collamore and his gang will be sure to tie up somewhere and wait for it; that was the programme and what I've been wondering is why they haven't done it before now."

"Where is she now? I don't see her any more!" broke in Dick.

Ned got out his night glass and looked ahead.

It was true that the lights of the Edith had been visible a mile or more ahead only a few moments before.

Now they had vanished, and what made it perplexing was the fact that the river was perfectly straight here. If it had been daylight they could have seen ahead for miles.

"The time has come!" said the Unknown. "This bears me out. The gold pirates have run the steamer into some cove to wait for their friends."

"More than likely," replied Ned. "We must be mighty careful, or we shall run right into them; but we are safe for the moment, so go on, Zed, and unfold your wonderful scheme."

"There's nothing so very wonderful about it," said the Unknown; "in fact, I may say it's as simple as rolling off a log. What I propose is that we try to capture the other steamer. Then we'll be in shape to take up the chase."

"What nonsense you are talking," cried Ned. "Might just as well talk of capturing the Edith."

"Not at all, dear boy, not at all!"

"And if not, why not?"

"Because we can't capture the Edith, but we can capture this other old tub."

"You know something you haven't told, Zed," said Dick.

"That's what I do. I know the signal that was to bring the other steamer into False Cove, where they first intended to wait for it. You see, Collamore probably felt that with you after him he would be safer below Fort Cudahy and Forty Mile than above them, and that's why he hurried off the way he did."

"Steamer coming down the river!" cried Dick. "I see her lights!"

"Sure as you live!" echoed Ned. "Do you suppose it can be the gold pirate's craft?"

"I'm dead sure of it," said the detective. "Now, then, will you leave all this to me?"

"That depends."



"On what?"

"How many men there are on the steamer."

"Six at the most."

"Same as the Edith?"

"Yes. The original plan was for all hands to come down in her, but when they found there was a chance to capture the Edith, they divided up. Leave it to me, and I'll show you how easy it will be to capture those scoundrels. Is it a go?"

"Yes. Since you are determined to make a mystery of it, we'll call it a go," said Ned. "Go ahead and manage the business your own way."

"Settled! I feel myself a man again!" cried the Unknown. "If I can capture the What's-her-name, I shall soon forget that I was ever captured myself."

"By the way, what is her name?" asked Ned.

"Same as mine," chuckled the detective.

"That means nothing."

"It means that you don't know and I don't know."

"She's coming nearer," said Dick. "She's gaining on us, sure."

"Plenty of time! Plenty of time!" declared the Unknown. "We'll pull into the next cove and haul the launch up among the bushes out of sight."

It was daylight before they found a suitable place for the detective's scheme.

When Edith awoke she found the launch being dragged over the grass.

Ned explained when she called out from the cabin to know what the matter was.

Meanwhile, the other steamer was plowing her way down the Yukon and the Unknown stood watching her from the bluff.

"She's right here!" he shouted to Ned. "We are going to have her. When we take up the chase again it will be in something better than a naphtha launch!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CAPTURE OF THE COMET.

THE cove into which the launch had been run was a peculiar place.

Nothing could have been better adapted to the detective's scheme.

The entrance was a narrow passage between two bluffs; once past this the cove took a sudden turn, and then broadened out into a regular lake, so to speak, where a hundred such steamers as the Edith could have been anchored without crowding each other, and with no danger of being seen from the river itself.

If the Unknown had been aware of all this, which he wasn't, he could not have chosen better, and as soon as he saw the sort of place it was, he declared that it would fill the bill to a T.

"If we can only get them to anchor here we shall be right in it," he said, as he explained his plan to Ned. "And I can do it. Don't you make any mistake! I can do it! Just leave it all to me."

It seemed a crazy undertaking to Ned and Dick.

Their instructions were to lie in wait among the bushes until the Unknown gave them word to move.

From the place where they were, they could distinctly see the detective on the bluff, and all at once they saw him throw up his rifle and fire two shots in quick succession.

Then he waited a moment and fired three more. After that he turned and waved his hand in the direction of his friends.

"That's his signal," said Dick. "He probably overheard it talked about while he was a prisoner on the steamer."

"Mysterious creature! He never will come out flat-footed and say what he means. Hark! There goes the answer! I thought so!"

Two shots rang out over the river—then three.

"You want to come ashore here! Captain Collamore says so!" the Unknown roared, making a speaking trumpet of his hands.

"Ay, ay! Give us the word!" was shouted back.

All could hear the call distinctly, although they could see nothing of the steamer from where they were.

"What a cheek he's got," laughed Dick. "Of course he hasn't got the word. Now see his fine scheme fall through."

"I'll bet you he's got it. That's his little secret," replied Ned.

He was quite right.

The Unknown had picked up the password of the gold pirates on board the Edith, and he was prepared to make the most of it now.

"Y—u—k! Yuk! Yukon!" he shouted out.

There was no answer for a moment.

Then a stentorian voice shouted: "The word is all right, but who the blazes are you?"

"I'm a new man!" answered the Unknown. "Come ashore in the boat—turn right into the cove. I'll tell you my name when you land."

"I'll bet you won't," laughed Ned, "and I'll bet they won't come ashore, either. Great Scott, Dick, it's hard work lying here doing nothing. I want to take a hand in this game."

"We'll have all the hand we want in it soon enough," said Dick. "Just you hold on, Ned. I tell you he's going to succeed."

They watched and listened.

There was no more shouting.

In a moment the detective turned away from the bluff and ran down the hill.

"They're coming! They're coming!" he cried. "It's working like a charm."

"Thunder! What are we to do now?" demanded Ned.

"Capture them—you can do it."

"How many?"

"Well, now, there's seven, and two more left on the steamer makes nine!"

"Phew! We've got a contract on hand."

"Yes, and one we can fulfill. Take it easy. Be



ready to act when I throw up my hand and snap my fingers three times."

Then the Unknown went down on the shore and waited.

"Got your rifle all ready, Edith?" asked Ned.

"All ready."

"Hold it so. If there's any shooting to be done, we depend upon you."

"I hope it won't come to that."

"More than likely it will. 'Tain't to be supposed that these gold pirates are going to give up tamely."

"It's an awful risk to run," said Dick. "If we make a miss of it, I tremble to think what Edith's fate will be."

"We ain't going to make a miss of it."

"There's going to be no miss," declared Ned. "Keep cool now. The critical moment is coming, and so is the boat."

It had just appeared around the bluff.

Ned could see that the men were perfect specimens of Dawson City toughs—men who came to the gold regions with no intention of working themselves, but entirely willing to prey on their neighbors and rob them—yes, murder them, if necessary, to get possession of their gold.

The Unknown did not appear to be a bit disturbed when the men pulled into the cove and came ashore.

"Well, where's Captain Collamore?" called out one who seemed to be the leader of the band.

"He's gone further up the cove. His orders are for you to build a fire and wait there. They'll be along before a great while."

"Gee! I don't like this," growled the man. "It don't seem straight to me."

"Those were the orders, though," said the detective, coolly. "I s'pose you're Jack Noakes?"

"That's who I am. Who the blazes are you?"

"I'm Captain Collamore's brother."

"Never knew he had a brother."

"He has three, and I'm the oldest."

"Gee! I believe you can lie as fast as a horse can trot, but you seem to have the password and the signal all straight."

"What more do you want?"

"To be sure it's all right. Say, did cap get the Edith down the river all right?"

"Got her down and lost her again."

"What? What?"

"What I tell you. Got her and lost her again. Didn't you see her lying off the levee as you passed Forty Mile?"

"See her at Forty Mile? No! How was I to see her when she wasn't there?"

"She was there all right. You didn't look sharp. Young Klondike captured her. He came down on us like a thousand of brick in False Cove and got the steamer and ran her into Forty Mile. He had twenty men with him. They followed us down in the Belle of Yukon and it was all we wanted to do to escape with our lives."

"Come, now! Come, now! That's a lie, sure. The Belle of Yukon has gone up the Klondike."

"That's where you are away off. The Belle of Yukon is at this moment at Forty Mile. You must have kept a good way out from shore or you'd have seen her, and the Edith, too."

Now all this bluff the Unknown gave out with perfect coolness.

It was remarkable how close he hit it, too.

These men had kept well away from shore when they passed Forty Mile.

They were entirely unable to disprove the Unknown's statements—in fact, they were beginning to believe.

"Did Captain Collamore get the gold, that's what I want to know?" asked Noakes.

"No he didn't. He couldn't find a cent's worth of dust on the Edith."

"What! What! Do you mean to tell me he didn't get onto the secret room, after all?"

"That's what I am telling you, pard. You seem to find it hard work to believe me."

"But where are they now?"

"Gone up the cove to look for grub in the Edith's boats; they managed to get off with them as I told you."

"No, you didn't."

"Thought I did. They are tracking a moose and I expect them back any minute, for I heard shots just before you came along. The orders were to have a fire ready and to wait here for them. They left me behind to give you the word, but I'll be blamed if I don't wish they'd left somebody else."

"They oughtn't to have left a stranger, that's what," growled Noakes, "but I suppose we've got to put up with it. Hustle round, boys, and build the fire and we'll have a little game of poker while we're waiting."

There was plenty of dry wood on the shore, and Jack Noakes and his companions soon had the fire blazing.

He then drew out a greasy pack of cards, and the men seating themselves on the ground, began to play.

Now, Young Klondike and his friends had not lost a word of all this.

They saw the Unknown's plan now.

With these men playing cards around a fire, capture would be comparatively easy.

But still, seven to four were big odds, and the detective evidently thought so, too, for he had not snapped his fingers yet.

Indeed, just about that time the Unknown seemed to be taking things easy.

He sat near the fire watching the game, looking as innocent as a lamb.

He was only waiting for the gold pirates to become thoroughly interested in what they were doing, and that time soon came.

The Unknown put up his left hand and snapped his fingers; then he did it again and then again.



"What in thunder are you doing that for?" demanded Noakes. "Do you want to hoodoo my hand?"

"Not at all. I've got cramp in my fingers," laughed the Unknown. "Guess I'll go up the cove and see if Cap Collamore is coming."

"Guess you won't. You stay right here."

"What's the matter now?"

"Sit down."

"I'd rather stand up. I don't like to be ordered about."

"Sit down!" roared Noakes, seizing his rifle.

Noakes was getting ugly, and things were beginning to look rusty; but the time had almost come. The trap was just ready to spring.

At the signal, Ned, Dick and Edith had made their move.

The jungle of bushes extended down to the water's edge on both sides of the open ground, which Noakes had naturally chosen for his fire.

Ned crawled through the bushes one way, and Dick went the other.

Both moved as noiselessly as a pair of Indians; Edith remained where she was.

All at once the boys sprang to their feet and covered the men with their rifles.

Things were about right now, but they did not dare to fire, for Noakes was still growling at the Unknown.

"Sit down, I tell you!" he snarled. "You stay right here with us. As soon as I actually know that you are Cap Collamore's brother, I'm ready to make friends with you, but not before."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, who wants you to make friends with me? Take that!" cried the Unknown, and he brought his clubbed rifle down over the gold pirate's head and knocked him over on his back.

Every man was on his feet in a twinkling.

The Unknown made a rush for the bushes.

"Fire!" he shouted. "Shoot down every mother's son of them, unless they surrender."

Then the rifles cracked.

Killing was not in Young Klondike's line, and they felt that they could do without it—it was all arranged.

Dick took one man in the arm, Ned another in the leg.

Edith shot the hat off of two while the Unknown was roaring out all the while. "Shoot 'em down! Shoot 'em down!" and firing over their heads.

The result was just what he anticipated.

The gold pirates very naturally thinking that they had a large force to deal with, took to their heels and ran off up the shore.

The shots followed them. When they halted at what they considered a safe distance they saw where they had made their mistake.

There was Dick and Ned scrambling into the boat, Edith and the Unknown covering their retreat.

"Move on! Move on!" shouted Edith. "If you stop now I shoot to kill!"

"Back! Clean 'em out!" roared Jack Noakes, who had scrambled to his feet and gone off with the rest.

There was a rush then.

Something had to be done.

Edith aimed at the pirate's shoulder, and tumbled him over wounded.

The others stopped short, and fell back.

This gave Edith just the chance she wanted.

She sprang into the boat followed by the Unknown and Dick, and Ned pulled out of the cove followed by a shower of shots which fortunately fell harmless around them.

A moment later and they had rounded the bluff, and were safe for the moment.

"Well done!" cried the detective. "Well done! Ye gods and little fishes, we've got there, but do you know I hardly believed we could do it myself."

"I was satisfied we could the moment I saw them land," said Ned; "they're only a lot of chumps, and particularly thick-headed ones at that. They'll have a sweet time getting out of that unless they find the launch."

"It's a blame shame about the launch," said Dick. "Is there no way of getting it?"

"I don't see any," replied Ned, grimly. "We are going to capture their steamer, and when we've done that we shan't need the launch."

The Unknown laughed and clapped Ned on the shoulder.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, you're just a bully fellow to work with!" he exclaimed. "Do you know I expected you'd make an awful fuss about losing the launch."

"Why should I? To tell you the truth, Zed, I fully expected to lose it as soon as I understood your scheme."

"Did you really? Then I'll own up that I never gave the launch a thought, and I've been kicking myself to think how stupid I was."

"Drop the launch! We've got the steamer on our hands now," said Edith. "They'll be on the bluff in a minute warning their friends. You say there are two more aboard yet, Zed?"

"Yes; I counted nine men on board, and only seven came off. Of course, there may be more still, for all I know."

"I don't see a soul," said Ned, looking toward the steamer.

They were almost there now.

They could see the name "Comet" painted on the wheel-house, but there was not a soul on deck.

"Let's pull around the bow and take 'em on the other side," said the Unknown.

"No one on the bluff yet," remarked Edith.

"They'll be there in a minute, though," added Dick. "What are you going to do, Ned; go right aboard?"

"You bet, if there's a chance. She looks a slow old tub. I doubt very much if we could ever hope to overhaul the Edith in a thing like this."

By this time they were close under the Comet's bow.



As they moved round to the other side, they saw a rope hanging over the steamer's side.

As the Comet, which was a small propeller, built to run on the California coast, sat low in the water, there would be no difficulty in getting on deck for the boys and the Unknown, but with Edith it was different.

"I'll have to stay here till you can get me up," said Edith, seeing the state of affairs at a glance. "Go right ahead and never mind me at all."

"Hello! Hello! On board the Comet! Hello!" shouted a voice from the bluff.

"The fun is beginning," said Ned. "Look out, I'm going up the rope."

"Me first," said Dick.

"Not by any means; I'm the man who goes first," declared the Unknown.

"Hello! Hello the Comet!" cried the voice from the shore again.

The gold pirates had come up on top of the bluff, that was evident, but as yet no answer had been returned to the hail.

Young Klondike had already got hold of the rope and had no notion of giving up his place to either of his companions.

Up he scrambled as nimbly as a cat and swung himself over on the deck—just in time to confront a tall, heavily-built man, who came hurrying up from below.

"Who in thunder are you?" cried the man, attempting to draw a revolver.

But Ned was too quick for him.

"That's my name!" he shouted, whipping out his revolver before the man could get his hand around to his pocket. "Move an inch! Call back to those fellows on the hill, and I'll drop you on the deck!"

"Young Klondike, I know you now!" gasped the man, falling back.

"Perhaps you know me, too!" cried the Unknown, coming on deck, revolver ready, just in time to confront a second man who came bounding out of the cabin. "Surrender, both of you! The Comet is ours! We are the kind that never get left!"

Certainly there was no getting left on that occasion.

Both men threw up their hands and surrendered.

Dick came on deck just as the job was done.

"Hooray! We've captured the Comet!" shouted the Unknown. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, the day is ours—I mean the steamer, but it's all the same."

## CHAPTER VII.

### WHERE IS THE EDITH?

"That's right! Tie 'em up, Young Klondike. We'll take no chances with gentlemen we don't know."

A ladder had been let down by Dick, and Edith came on deck just as the Unknown made this valuable suggestion.

Meanwhile, the men on the bluff were staring over at the steamer, calling out things which would not look well in print.

"Say!" said the big man, gruffly, "you needn't go to the trouble of tying me up. I ain't no fool! I know which side my bread is buttered. You've got to have someone to run your engine, and I'm your man."

"Are you the engineer?" asked Ned.

"That's what I am!"

"And this other man?"

"He's the cook."

"A very important person, if he don't take a notion to poison us. Do you come over on our side, too, Mr. Cook? If you do we'll go light on you both."

"S'pose I may as well," growled the cook. "But it ain't my style to poison people. I'm tough, I'll admit, but I hain't as tough as that."

"We'll give you both your liberty, then," said Ned, "and see that you don't make us sorry for having done it. Search 'em, Dick. Take away any arms they may have and let 'em go."

The search was quickly made.

An extra revolver was found on the engineer and two ugly looking knives on the cook.

"Will you two work your best for us now?" demanded Young Klondike. "If you will, it's a thousand dollars to each of you the day we set foot in Dawson City, if you won't, why, then——"

"I will. I said so before," broke in the engineer.

"Same here," declared the cook.

"Settled! Get back to your post, engineer. Stay, though. One word. Is there anybody else on board?"

"No one else."

"Enough! Get below. Cook, get breakfast ready, and remember you'll be required to taste each dish before it's served."

"Hooray for our side!" cried the Unknown, as the two men departed. "We've won the day and captured the steamer, now the sooner we pull out the better. I'll steer."

"Do you know anything about steering a steamer?" demanded Dick.

"I steered one twice as big as this for a week on the Amazon River, when I was down in Brazil looking after my man in '81."

"Seems to me you've been looking after your man a thundering long while, Zed," Young Klondike remarked.

"Long enough to have found him, dear boy, which I haven't; but that's got nothing to do with steering steamers. I want you to understand I can steer this one well enough."

"Blest if I don't believe you. I believe you can do anything you set your mind to. Get into the wheel-house and give the engineer the bell."

"Down the river, I suppose."

"Of course. The chase goes right on. Hear those fellows howl! Well, they can comfort themselves with the launch, providing they can find it. Wonder if Collamore and his pirates have found the gold yet?"



"We want to find them, and then we'll know," cried the Unknown, hurrying away to the wheel-house.

A moment later the engineer got the bell, and the Comet started down the Yukon.

Jack Noakes and his gang stood on the bluff, shaking their fists at them.

But they were quite helpless, and all they could do was to stay there and watch the steamer sail away.

"This is immense!" cried Dick, once they were well started. "Come, Edith; let's you and I take a tour of inspection and see what sort of craft we've got."

They went all over the steamer from bow to stern.

It did not take long, for there was not much of it.

Edith declared that she preferred her namesake to this craft, as well she might, for the Comet was old and dilapidated, as well as horribly dirty, but for all that she was fast, and they were making much better time than Ned supposed would be possible when he first came aboard.

For a little while Ned remained in the wheel-house with the Unknown.

Everything went along swimmingly. The detective certainly understood steering a steamer.

"I believe you could run us down to St. Michaels without the least trouble, Zed," declared Young Klondike, after watching his methods a little while.

"Of course I could," chuckled the detective. "I could run you to Frisco for that matter. Oh, I'm right at home in the wheel-house. The only thing that is worrying me is the engineer."

"Of course he can block our game if he wants to."

"He surely can; there's no doubt about it."

"I think I'll go down and have a little talk with his royal highness, the engineer," laughed Ned.

He found the man quietly attending to his duties in the engine-room.

"Well, how is everything going?" Ned asked.

"First rate."

"Glad to hear it. Look here, friend, what's your name?"

"Plain John Smith."

"A good name."

"And it belongs to a man who is not quite as bad as you may think."

"I'm sure of that. May I ask you a few questions?"

"As many as you wish."

"You ain't altogether satisfied with your life with these gold pirates?"

"No, I ain't. Haven't been with 'em long. They hired me to run this engine and made big promises what they would do for me. You may say I don't know them at all."

"What's the matter with shaking them altogether, Smith, and working for me?"

"I wouldn't ask anything better. I have heard that Young Klondike was a splendid boss to work for."

"My men all seem to stay by me. If I succeed in

carrying out my plans, I shall run the Edith regularly between Dawson City and St. Michaels next season; how would you like to be engineer? I shall pay three hundred dollars a month."

"That would suit me right down to the ground."

"Well, then, you do your best for me now, and you may consider the position yours."

"I'm very thankful to you, sir. I was always straight until I fell in with that scoundrel Collamore."

"He is a scoundrel!"

"Worse than you know, sir. Far worse. You've taken a great load off my mind; fact is I was just about starving when he picked me up."

"Well, you tie to me and I'll see that you don't starve this winter, and in the spring you'll be right in it. How about the cook? Have we any reason to fear him?"

"I don't think so, sir. He's too lazy to make you any serious trouble. I wish I could do something to show you how grateful I feel."

"You can tell me all you know about the gold pirates."

"That's next to nothing. I'd cheerfully tell you if I had anything to tell."

"You can't give me any idea where we are likely to find the Edith then?"

"No, I can't. I don't think Noakes knew himself. His orders were to go to False Cove and meet them there, and if he didn't find the Edith to keep on down the river till he did."

"You are sure that's straight?"

"As far as I know, it is, sir. I can't give you a single pointer. I only wish I could."

Ned went on deck a good deal disappointed. He had hoped to get some definite information about the plans of the gold pirates, but it was evidently not to be had.

The morning passed in anxious watching for the Edith.

They were now passing through a section of country entirely uninhabited, and as the river here ran straight for an immense distance, there was nothing to prevent them from seeing the steamer, even if she was many miles in advance.

But the Edith was not visible.

Ned kept a constant look out, and it is hardly necessary to say that the Unknown did the same.

There was only one conclusion to draw, and that was that the Edith had gone into one of the many fiords, or coves, as they are here called; deep channels winding in among the hills, making islands of them.

There were hundreds of such, and in any one of them the Edith might lie concealed.

The cook served a good breakfast and a better dinner.

After dinner Edith retired into a state-room to lie down, and Ned and Dick went up into the wheel-house to have a talk with the Unknown.

"I don't believe there's any use in going further,"



he said; "I'm sure we've passed the Edith, so sure that I'm all ready to give up."

"Good enough! Glad to hear you say so!" cried the Unknown. "You know what I told you an hour ago, dear boy?"

"I know, Zed. I give up now."

"I said then we'd most likely passed her, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did. I admit it now. We had better turn back."

"It ain't possible we are making a mistake, is it?" suggested Dick. "The Edith is fast, much faster than the Comet, and there was a good deal of delay."

"Not enough for us to lose sight of her the way we have," declared Ned. "Yes, we certainly ought to turn back; there's no doubt of it, and the sooner we do it, the better."

"I don't agree with you."

"But why?"

"Can't tell you, but I'm sure we'll be making a mistake if we turn back."

"If you can't give some reason for what you say, Dick, I don't see how you can expect——"

"Hold on!"

"What?"

"I couldn't have given you a reason a moment ago, but I can now."

"I know your reason, Dick," cried the Unknown, "and by the Jumping Jeremiah, I believe you are right!"

Suddenly the Unknown turned the Comet into a cove which they were in the act of passing.

As her bow swung around, Ned caught sight of a column of black smoke rising above the high hill which formed the lower side of the cove.

"You think that smoke comes from the Edith," he cried.

"I'm sure of it," said the Unknown. "That hill is an island; they've taken the steamer in behind it."

"More than likely their hold-out is there," suggested Dick.

"I'd like to bet on it!" cried the Unknown. "Now, Young Klondike, it's time for you to act. How far shall we go with the Comet? It is for you to say."

Ned was silent for a moment. He was watching the smoke.

"That steamer is standing still," he said, at last.

"That's what she is," replied the detective. "I know what I should do."

"What?"

"Won't tell you. I want to hear your plan first."

"I'd leave the steamer here and go ahead on foot, get as near as we can to the Edith, and then watch our chances to spring a trap on the gold pirates."

"By the jumping Jeremiah, how great minds think alike! The very plan I was going to propose."

"What do you say, Dick?"

"Yes, every time," replied Dick. "If we were to run the Comet up in sight of the Edith, it would be sure to lead to trouble, and couldn't possibly do any good."

"There's nothing like harmony for quick and effective work."

Young Klondike and his friends never quarreled, consequently whatever they undertook was pretty sure to succeed.

The steamer ran up to the bank and stopped, Ned went ashore and made her bow fast to a tree.

"What's the matter?" asked Smith, coming up out of the engine-room.

"We're going back into the mountains for awhile," called Ned. "Can we trust you to take care of the Comet till we come back?"

"You can trust me to look after the cook and do the best I can, but I ain't much on the fight, boss, I'll tell you that."

"Do your best, that's all we ask for," replied Ned. "Dick, call Edith; we want to start right away."

"I'm here. I don't need any calling," cried Edith, coming out of the cabin. "What's up now, Ned?"

"Look there!" said Ned, pointing to the smoke.

"My namesake?"

"You bet!"

"About time we struck her. What are you going to do?"

"We are going up the mountain to have a look at her as she lies. We'll decide then. Get your rifle, Edith, and come along."

Edith lost no time.

Dick and the Unknown already had their rifles ready.

Something was said about taking provisions, but Ned would not hear to it. He had great confidence in the engineer, and felt certain that unless something serious happened, they would find the Comet all right when they came back.

A few moments later the ascent of the mountain began.

It was hard climbing.

Still, there was nothing for it but to go that way, for the shore was so rough that it was more than doubtful if they could follow it around.

As soon as they entered the forest, they lost sight of the smoke and did not see it again until they came out on the top of the mountain which was entirely bare of trees.

Ned was first out and he saw the Edith the moment he looked down on the other side.

"There she is! There she is!" he cried. "Oh, what a mistake we would have made if we had turned back."

"Ye gods and little fishes, it's the steamer, fast enough," exclaimed the Unknown, "but it's going to be a terrible job to get down to her. Did you ever see anything so rough as the mountain is on this side?"

This was true enough. The descent was abrupt for about a hundred feet down to the stretch of level land where there were a few stunted trees.

Beyond that it was a steep descent right over the rocks, down to the water's edge.

The mountain was actually an island, the cove—it



was nothing more than an arm of the Yukon—running completely around it. The Edith lay right at the bend of the mountain; a run of a quarter of a mile would bring her out upon the river on the other side from where the Comet lay.

"A good hiding-place," said Dick; "couldn't be better. I don't see anybody on the steamer, though."

"Nor I," said the Unknown. "Get out your glass, Ned, and have a look."

Ned surveyed the Edith long and earnestly.

"I certainly can't see anybody," he said, at last. "The deck is deserted, and I doubt very much if there is any one aboard."

"Do you suppose they can have abandoned her?" asked Edith.

"It may be so. Suppose you take a look, Dick."

Dick tried it and reported the same as Ned.

"We may as well make a move down and get as near to her as we can," said the Unknown. "Hold on! What's that smoke on shore there? I thought first it was from the Edith and had settled down, but I don't think it can be that."

"Take the glass and look," said Dick.

The Unknown seized the glass and directed it toward the smoke.

"It's a fire on the shore," he said, presently. "That's what it is. If I know anything the gold pirates have all gone ashore and left the Edith to take care of herself."

"That ought to be just our chance," said Ned. "Let's hurry down and see what we can do."

So they started down the mountain.

The mystery of the disappearance of the Edith was solved, but it was one thing to locate the stolen steamer and another to recapture her.

That there was good hard work still to be done Young Klondike felt well assured.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HOW THE GOLD PIRATES LOST THEIR PRIZE.

"THERE! Thank goodness we've got so far on the road to glory!" exclaimed the Unknown, as they came down upon the table land already described.

It was hard to realize that they were on a mountain at all now.

The table land stretched to a long distance right and left, and out to its edge where the steep ascent began was fully a quarter of a mile.

Of course the river and the steamer had now vanished; the worst of the scramble down the mountain was still to come.

Led by Young Klondike they were hurrying across the plain, when the Unknown gave one of his sudden exclamations.

"What's this? What's this?" he cried, pointing down to prints of a human foot plainly visible in the thick moss which grew all over the ground.

"A man!" exclaimed Ned.

"An Indian!" echoed the Unknown.

"How do you know?" demanded Edith.

"How do I know? Why, that foot wore a moccasin, and not a shoe."

"Wait! No don't wait—push on to the end of this level, and wait for me there. I'm going to follow this trail a little way and see what it means."

"No, no! Don't let's separate!" cried Ned.

"I'm gone!" was the Unknown's answer, and he plunged into a thick clump of bushes where the trail lost itself, and in a twinkling was out of sight.

"I don't like this," said Dick. "If there are Indians about the sooner we get down the mountain the better."

"Come back, Zed! Come back!" Ned called out.

At the same instant a shot rang out.

"Help! Help! This way! Edith! Edith!" yelled the Unknown.

"Trouble!" cried Ned, making a dive for the bushes.

"Just as I supposed!" echoed Dick.

Edith said nothing, but ran on with the rest.

They had not far to go before the whole situation was made plain.

There was the Unknown scrambling up a tree, and running toward him was a huge bear.

Edith burst out laughing, for it was a comical sight to see the fat little detective shinning up the tree, shouting all the while for help.

"Shoot him, Edith! Shoot him!" he yelled. "Ye gods and little fishes! I don't object to being scalped by Indians, but I'll be ding-dong-danged if I want to be hugged to death by a blame big bear!"

Edith took aim and fired, but she was laughing so that she made a miss of it, and the bear losing his interest in the tree, turned and made a rush for Edith and the boys.

"Hello! This is getting serious! It must be stopped!" cried Ned.

He flung up his rifle and fired.

The bear fell dead under the tree.

"Hooray for our side!" yelled the Unknown. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, I'm all right up here, and I guess I'll have to stay so, for I can never get down unless I jump down, and I'm sure to break my neck if I do that."

Ned ran forward, but before he had taken a dozen steps an awful yell rang out among the trees further on.

To the general consternation a band of Indians came rushing out, yelling in blood curdling fashion.

"Thunder! and my rifle is empty! Quick, Edith! Dick!" shouted Ned.

As Young Klondike planted his foot on the dead bear, Edith and Dick fired at the approaching Indians.

"Give 'em another round, Edith!" cried the Unknown, from his perch in the tree.

The Indians, shouting madly and waving their tomahawks and spears, came rushing on.

The situation was now critical.



Ned saw that nothing but a stubborn resistance was going to save them.

"Do your best, Edith," he cried. "Hit 'em again, Dick! I'll load up in a jiffy, and take my turn."

Edith never faltered. Dick faced the savages as calmly as if he had been shooting at a mark.

Before Ned was able to get his rifle loaded, the Indians knew they had met their match.

Each shot from Edith's rifle told, and Dick did good work.

With several of their number seemingly wounded, the Indians turned and ran back into the woods.

Young Klondike fired a few parting shots after them, but it was hardly necessary.

Evidently they belonged to some wild tribe but little acquainted with firearms, for they were seen no more.

"Good enough!" cried the Unknown, once it was certain that they had actually gone. "That's the way to do the business! I'd have taken a hand in, too, if I'd been able; do you think they are coming back again, Ned?"

"Don't look so," replied Ned; "last I saw of them they were making off as fast as they could go."

"They've got enough," said Edith. "You won't see them back again. I'm sorry this has occurred, though. If those shots were heard down on the shore it will warn the gold pirates, and make our chance of capturing the Edith beautifully less."

"Will someone have the kindness, the condescension, the everlasting obligingness, to help me down out of this tree!" called the Unknown.

"What's the matter with jumping down?" laughed Ned.

"Or sliding down?" said Edith.

"If you had wings you might fly down," added Dick.

"Many thanks for your valuable suggestions," said the Unknown, "but I'm not equal to the shock of jumping, and my pantaloons won't stand the slide. As for the wings, it would take too long for them to sprout, even if I was to plant 'em now. It begins to look to me very much as if I should be obliged to remain where I am."

"I'll fix you," said Ned, and he unslung a short-handled ax which he had found on the Comet and brought along with them, and with it cut a number of notches in the trunk of the tree.

By the aid of these the Unknown was able to get back on terra firma, much to his relief.

"Thunder! I wish I'd never shot at that bear!" he growled; "that fool shot set the whole thing a-going."

"Perhaps it's a good thing you did," said Ned, "for now we know something of the danger we've got to face. Indians don't retreat that way without a reason. We shall hear more of them, and the sooner we light out the better for all parties concerned."

"It seems a shame to go away and leave that beautiful bearskin," said Edith. "Must we do it, Ned?"

"I reckon we must," said Ned. "It don't strike me we've got any time to spend skinning bears, though I'm willing to go into it if the rest of you insist."

"I say let's start right down the mountain!" exclaimed the Unknown.

"Start it is," said Edith. "Come along, boys."

As hard a scramble as any of the party had ever experienced followed.

At times it seemed as if they never would be able to get down over the rocks, but at last it was accomplished and they found themselves at the water's edge.

Here the shore was lined with great boulders which offered many chances to hide.

At no great distance away lay the Edith, steam up and apparently deserted.

The smoke on the shore was still rising, but they could see no one.

"Let's sneak up as close as we can to the fire and see how the cat jumps," suggested the Unknown. "I make no doubt that the gold pirates are there all right."

"I could swim out to the steamer easy enough," said Ned. "In ten minutes I could be on her deck."

"What good would it do you to go aboard alone?" asked Edith.

"I only wish I could go with you," said Dick; "but I'd get the cramp, sure."

"My way is the best," said the Unknown. "Come on, boys and girls. We'll sneak from one rock to another. Perhaps we can strike one of the Edith's boats along the shore."

They moved forward with great caution, and in a few moments came in sight of the fire, around which a number of men lay apparently asleep.

"Hello! All hands drunk!" whispered the Unknown.

"Do you think so?" asked Ned.

"I'm sure of it. What else would make them snooze away their time in broad daylight? Hark! what's that?"

They were right abreast of the steamer now, and as they listened, they could hear pounding below the deck.

"By gracious, there's someone aboard there," breathed Dick.

"Yes, and they are cutting away the partition, trying to get at the secret room," said Ned. "That's what they are doing as sure as fate."

They listened. The pounding kept right on.

Close to the shore, near the sleepers around the fire, was the Edith's boat.

"If we only had that it would be so easy to get around on the other side and get aboard," said the Unknown.

He looked at Ned inquiringly.

"Well, I guess I know what you want," said Ned.

"I reckon you do, Young Klondike. Are you game for it?"

"That's what I am," was Ned's answer, and he



threw off his coat and hat, and began taking off his shoes.

"Don't run any risk, Ned," said Edith.

"I ain't going to," replied Ned. "I can get that boat. You keep those fellows covered. Look here, Zed, you know their number; count 'em and tell me how many ought to be on board."

"I've done that already, dear boy; unless they've added to their number since I left the Edith, there ought to be only two aboard now."

"Cap Collamore and Pod Dunbury?"

"That's right. I don't see them among the rest."

"That's good enough. We ought to be equal to those two."

"I should say so," put in Dick. "Lively now, Ned. They may wake up any time."

"I'm all ready," replied Ned.

He dropped down and seemed to slide into the water. It could hardly be called a dive, but he went in head first, and was out of sight in an instant.

All watched breathlessly to see him come up, and when he did so there he was alongside the boat.

In a moment the boat was moving toward them. Ned, with his head just about the water, was towing it.

All had been done so noiselessly, that not a man of all those about the fire stirred.

"I knew he could do it," whispered Dick. "Ned never fails."

"Hold your breath! We ain't out of the woods yet," said the detective. "Ha! What's that?"

A loud crash was heard on the Edith.

"The partition is down," said Dick.

"Sounds like it," replied the detective, anxiously.

"Oh, how I wish I was over there! I'd just like to put the handcuffs on that scoundrel Collamore—it would do me good."

"Don't talk," said Edith. "One of the pirates is stirring. If they should wake up there'll be trouble on our hands right away."

One of the men turned over and stretched himself.

It was lucky for him that he did not get up, for Edith had him covered, and if he had, that would have been the last of him.

As it was, he turned over and went to sleep again, and none of the others moved.

A moment more brought Ned up with the boat.

"Get right in," he said. "Now's our time! Did you hear the partition go?"

"That's what we did," said the detective, helping Edith into the boat. "You did that well, Young Klondike. If we can only get on the deck of the steamer without being seen, we'll have some chance."

"We'd better cut the anchor cable as we pass," said Ned; "then we can start the Edith right off the moment we get aboard."

"I say yes to that," replied Dick. "There's a spare anchor below in case we need one."

Ned scrambled into the boat.

He did not seem to mind his wet clothes a bit.

Dick threw out the oars and pulled for the steamer.

They had no more than started, when a shrill cry was heard on the mountain side.

"What's that?" exclaimed Edith.

"Some bird," said Dick. "There it goes again."

The cry was repeated on the other side of the fire, coming out of a clump of woods that lay in that direction, as near as the boys could make out.

"That's no bird, and I'm betting on it," said the detective.

"What then? Men?" asked Ned.

"Gold pirates or Indians—probably Indians."

"I shouldn't wonder a bit. No doubt they are watching us."

"More than likely. Look out for shots."

Ned and Edith kept their eyes fixed on the mountain while the Unknown watched the steamer.

Neither saw anything suspicious.

Dick pulled around the Edith's bow, Ned cutting the anchor rope as they passed, and came up alongside.

"So far, so good," breathed the detective, "and there's the gangway open. Now to get aboard."

They listened. Voices could be heard talking in the cabin.

"Here goes," whispered Ned. He could just reach the lower deck and there was no difficulty in pulling himself up, and he did it almost without a sound.

Next it was Edith; Ned helped her up. Dick and the Unknown followed and the boat was made fast.

"Everything ready?" breathed the detective.

Ned nodded. They could hear the voices distinctly now.

Two men seemed to be talking in the cabin.

"By gaul, we've got it at last," the voice of Pod Dunbury was heard saying. "Cap, Young Klondike's gold is ours. Shall I wake up the boys?"

"For what?" demanded Captain Collamore's voice; the answer was in surly, sneering tones.

"To divide."

"Divide nothing. Let the drunken loafers sleep it out. Pod, you can work the engine, can't you?"

"You bet."

"And I guess I can steer. What's the matter with starting down the river and giving the boys the slip?"

"By gaul, we're as good as dead if we are ever caught, cap."

"Pod, I don't intend to be caught any more than I intend to divide the gold."

"I'm with you, cap. I was only thinking—Great snakes! What was that?"

All at once a horrible yell rang out on shore.

"Indians!" breathed the Unknown. "Hide boys! Slip forward, Edith. Let 'em start with us aboard."

They all made a dive into the little cabin intended for the crew.

Looking out through the window they could see the Indians swarming down upon the camp-fire.

Several of the men were scrambling up.

Shots were fired.

It was a hand to hand tussle between the Indians and the pirates who had been aroused.



"Cap! Cap!" they called. "Turn the gun on them! Lend us a hand here! Where in thunder is the boat?"

All these cries and others Young Klondike and his friends heard.

Then the steamer swung round and they could no longer see the shore, although the shots and shouts were still distinctly heard.

There was a small cannon on deck which Ned had provided in case of emergency.

This was the gun referred to, but Captain Collamore had no idea of turning it on the Indians.

The treacherous scoundrel would just as soon his pirates were all scalped as not.

He hurried on deck, and Pod Dunbury went to the engine-room.

Just then Ned moved away from the window and started for the door.

"Where now?" asked Dick.

"On deck," said Ned. "I'm after Captain Collamore."

"He'll collar me or I'll collar him," said the Unknown. "I'm going, too."

"Same here," said Dick. "Now's our time. Edith, you'd better stay here where you are safe."

"Not if I know it," said Edith. "Is it my style to hang behind?"

"It never was yet," whispered Ned, "but it's our time though, and we'll all make a move together—here goes!"

As they stole up the main stairway, they heard Captain Collamore shout:

"Who in thunder cut the anchor loose?"

"He'll know before he's many minutes older," breathed the Unknown. "Hold back, boys! Give him a chance to get into the wheel-house. We can do better work then."

Already the captain had started for the wheel-house.

Meanwhile, the fight was going right on over on the bank.

All hands were up and at it by this time.

As Ned stole out on deck he gave one glance shoreward.

The gold pirates seemed to be getting the best of it.

Several of their number had gone down, but not a few of the Indians had been shot.

All at once the whole band gave a wild yell and started on the retreat.

"Cap! Cap! Let 'em have the gun!" roared Joe Judson, the engineer.

"Go to thunder!" shouted the captain.

He was in the wheel house now.

Instantly he pulled the bell and the Edith started.

The howl that went up on shore then was tremendous.

"You've found the gold! You're going to give us the slip!" howled Judson.

He turned his rifle on the steamer and fired.

Crash! went the glass in the wheel-house window.

Captain Collamore dodged down before the next shot came, and the Edith flew on down the cove.

At the same instant the wheel-house door came open.

There stood Young Klondike and his party.

Four rifles covered the treacherous Collamore.

"Captain, I'll trouble you for my steamer," said Young Klondike, coolly. "Throw up your hands or you're a dead man."

## CHAPTER IX.

### RUN AGROUND.

"YOUNG KLONDIKE, don't kill me! I cave."

Captain Collamore was crawling on the deck at Ned's feet, begging for his life with a piteous whine.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, you ought to be shot right now," said the Unknown. "Put a ball through his black heart, just for fun, Ned."

"Tie him up! There's your man, Zed; now's your time to make an arrest," Ned replied, as he sprang for the wheel.

The Unknown pounced upon the cowardly captain, as a cat might spring on a mouse.

The detective always had at least one pair of handcuffs about him.

He pretended that he held them ready for his mysterious man, but be that as it might they came right into play for the captain now.

The Unknown snapped them about the captain's wrists in a jiffy.

"Lie there, you mean dog!" he exclaimed, giving the captain a kick which sent him tumbling over backward on the wheel-house floor.

Meanwhile, the shots had been flying around the wheel-house.

Shouts and yells came from the gold pirates on the shore, but they had done their worst, for Ned had been sending the Edith down the cove, and they were already well out of range.

"What's the matter? What's the matter up there?" Pod Dunbury was shouting through the speaking tube from the engine-room.

"It's all right now," Ned called back, making his voice sound as much like the captain's as he could; "you stay below and attend to business, Pod."

"Gee whiz! I'm attending to business, hain't I?" came the answer, up through the tube.

"He seems to be getting excited," laughed Edith.

"Shall I go down and capture him, Ned?" asked Dick.

"Let him alone for a few moments; I want to speak to this dirty scoundrel here," said the Unknown.

Captain Collamore crouched in a corner thoroughly cowed.

"I've clean surrendered, Young Klondike," he whined. "Don't let that man kill me. It won't do you any good, and I can throw a lot in your way if you will only let me live."



"You don't deserve much from me," answered Ned. "Where's my gold?"

"Down in the cabin."

"Did you find it?"

"Just before you came aboard."

"As I supposed."

"Don't kill me! I know I've used you rough, Young Klondike, but I don't want to die."

"No one has talked of killing you."

"I talked of it," broke in the Unknown. "He ought to be cut in quarters, roasted over a slow fire—that's what ought to be done to him."

The Unknown winked at Dick who could scarcely keep a straight face, Captain Collamore was so thoroughly scared.

"Hold on!" said Ned. "I want to hear what the captain has to offer. What is this you can throw in my way? Let's hear about that."

"Why, it's the Gold Queen! She'll be down to-night, and—"

"Hold on, captain. I'm no gold pirate!" cried Ned, indignantly. "You don't suppose I want to capture the Gold Queen!"

"No, no, no! I didn't think anything of that sort. What I meant was that you could save her from being captured. There'll be a reward for that, I suppose."

"Do you think I'm looking for rewards?"

"Don't know. Most of us want all we can get."

"That ain't my style. I guess it won't be yours to capture the Gold Queen, either. Your wings are pretty well clipped."

"Not so much as you think for."

"What do you mean?"

"Promise not to let that man kill me and I'll tell you."

The Unknown had been all the while making horrible faces at the captain and flourishing his revolver.

The leader of the gold pirates counted himself as good as dead if he was to be left to the detective's tender mercies.

"You have my promise," said Ned. "I'll protect you if you speak out flat-footed and tell all you know."

"Well, then, here it is; there's a band of fellows led by Jack Noakes who intend to hold up the Gold Queen on her way down the river to-night."

"Oh, indeed!" laughed Dick; "that's great news."

"I suppose you'll tell us next that they are on the steamer Comet," said Edith.

"That's the steamer, miss. They're a tough gang, and you can bet they'll capture the Gold Queen."

"Not with the Comet," said Ned. "Captain, your news ain't worth a crooked six pence. We captured the Comet hours ago."

"Thunder! Then I'm a back number!" groaned the captain.

"Decidedly."

"Give him to me and let me carve him up!" cried the Unknown, pulling out a long knife and beginning to flourish that.

"Get up and come with us. We'll put you where you can't do any harm," Ned sternly ordered.

They drove the captain before them down into the cabin.

The door of the secret room had been cut away and the gold lay there all exposed.

"By time, it's too tough! To think that this should come upon me just as I succeeded in getting there," Captain Collamore groaned.

"Perhaps you'll think it's tough when we turn you over to the Northwest police in Dawson City," said Ned, opening the door of the spare state-room. "Get in there now. We'll attend to your case by and by."

They locked the captain in and proceeded to examine the gold.

It had not been disturbed in any way.

Ned put back the boards which had been wrenched off the best way he could, and when they had made all secure they went down into the engine-room and pounced on Mr. Pod Dunbury.

The rascally gold pirate was taken entirely by surprise when he saw Young Klondike with Dick and Edith standing there in the doorway covering him with their revolvers.

"Great snakes! How did you get aboard?" he gasped out.

"Throw up your hands!" ordered Ned, sternly.

"Throw up your hands!"

If it had been possible for Pod Dunbury to have put his hands up any quicker, he would certainly have done it.

He was a mean, snivelling fellow, and he whined worse than Captain Collamore, now.

They paid no attention to his talk.

While Ned held him covered, Dick disarmed the fellow.

"What are you going to do with me, Young Klondike?" he asked.

"Do you want to stay here and run this engine for us?" inquired Ned.

"Don't let him!" cried Edith. "He'll be sure to play us some trick!"

"No, I won't! I vow I won't!" declared Dunbury.

"Let him try it if he dares!" said Ned, sternly.

"Don't you show yourself outside the door of the engine-room; if you do—well, it will be your last move. Do you agree?"

"Yes, yes! I'll run the engine. You can depend on me," Pod Dunbury declared.

"He may as well be there as anywhere else," remarked Ned, as they went on deck. "Neither of us wants to be tied to the engine-room. As soon as we get back to the Comet, we'll put John Smith in charge."

They went back to the wheel-house and reported their success to the Unknown.

Meanwhile, they had come out into the Yukon again, and the detective turned the steamer back up the river.



"About a mile run ought to take us back to the Comet," said Ned. "I do hope we find her all right."

"I don't know about this business. I don't like the idea of leaving that infernal gold pirate in charge of the engine. There's lots he might do to down us," said the Unknown.

"Only till we get to the Comet," said Ned. "I'm sure it will be all right—look out how you are steering, Zed. You'll have us aground next if you keep so near in shore."

"No fear. We've got to make a quick turn when we get to the cove."

Ned looked anxiously forward.

The shores of the island were sloping and sandy.

It seemed to Young Klondike as if the slope must extend down into the water.

That meant shallows, of course.

"Hadn't we better do a little sounding if we are going to keep so close in shore?" he asked.

"No, no, no! All nonsense!" replied the detective. "I know my business. Who's running this steamer, Young Klondike—you or me?"

"I think I ought to be allowed to have something to say about it."

"Say your say, but—Thunder! what's this?"

It was just as Ned anticipated.

There was a terrific shock just then.

Edith was thrown over against the side of the pilot house—it was all that Ned could do to keep his feet.

"Now you've done it, Zed!" cried Dick. "Ned told you how it would be."

Sure enough the Unknown had run the Edith high on a submerged sand bank.

They were there, and likely to stay there, it seemed.

Pod Dunbury responded to the bells all right and the steamer strained and tugged, but all their efforts seemed only to send her deeper into the sand.

"Zed, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," cried Edith; "here we are stuck out in the river, and here we are likely to stay."

"I acknowledge the corn;" groaned the detective. "Young Klondike, forgive me. It's all my fault. What in the world are we to do?"

But Ned could suggest nothing.

There they were run aground on the sand bank, and there, sure enough, they seemed likely to stay.

## CHAPTER X.

### A SMALL STRIKE ON THE YUKON.

"WHAT we ought to do to you, Zed, is to make you get out and pull the steamer off, if it broke your back," said Ned, after it became certain that they were in a serious fix; "but I ain't going to scold. There's no use in it. My opinion is that we shall work off gradually by the force of the current. Until then we've got to take things easy—that's all."

"Thank you my lad for your great goodness," said the Unknown. "I have many sins to answer for and

this is perhaps the worst of them. It's all my fault. I stand ready to admit that."

"S'pose we go ashore and see if we can't shoot something for dinner?" suggested Edith.

"I'm with you there," answered Ned, "but I'll make another suggestion that I think ought to be acted on first."

"What's that?"

"Dick and I will take the boat and run up to the Comet. We'll make fast to the Edith and pull her off easy enough then."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, that's good business!" cried the Unknown. "Am I getting stupid in my old age or what's the matter with me that I didn't think of that brilliant idea myself?"

"It's what's going to be done," said Ned. "Come on, Dick. We'll start right now. Edith, I think you'd better postpone your shooting expedition and stay aboard till we get back."

"Decidedly," said Edith. "That's understood."

"You ain't afraid of that man Dunbury?"

"Well, I guess she ain't if I'm around," said the Unknown. "I'll watch. If he shows himself on deck I'll put a ball down his throat."

"Which you won't, unless you have to. We don't want any killing," said Ned, and he and Dick went off in the boat a few moments after that.

Now the Edith had already gone half the distance to the mouth of the cove before the accident occurred.

Ned expected to see the Comet when they rounded the projecting point right ahead of them, but there was another deep indentation in the shore here and another headland beyond.

It was necessary to cut across this cove and pass around the second point before they could see the steamer.

The boys pulled for all they were worth, but only to be disappointed.

When they passed the point there was no Comet to be seen.

There was the cove they had first entered all right enough, but the Comet had disappeared.

"By gracious, she's gone, Ned!" exclaimed Dick. "Smith went back on us after all."

"Or Jack Noakes and his gang came down on the launch and captured them. It was more likely that."

"Don't make much odds which; we're left, anyhow."

"Do you think they went up the cove or out into the river?"

"If they'd gone out on the river we'd have been sure to have seen them, wouldn't we?"

"Not if they went up the river."

"That's so."

"Or down, either, providing they went soon after we started up the mountain."

The more Ned thought about it the more he was inclined to believe that the gold pirates had gone up the river.



The long, straight stretch which lay below the islands favored this idea.

It scarcely seemed possible that they would not have caught a glimpse of the steamer if she had gone down.

"We'd better get back to the Edith as quick as we can," said Ned at last. "If they've gone up the cove they are sure to strike Collamore's gang and there may be trouble. The Unknown and Edith could never hope to hold out against them alone."

No time was lost in pulling back to the steamer.

The situation here remained unchanged.

"Just as I expected," said the Unknown, when Ned reported the disappearance of the Comet. "We've got to just take it easy and wait our chances."

"Any trouble with Pod Dunbury?" asked Ned.

"Not a bit. We locked him in the next state-room to Cap Collamore and tied him up, so we needn't be bothered with him. Now, I say, let's go ashore and give Edith a chance to shoot something, for I'm as hungry as a wolf, and those infernal gold pirates have cleaned out every bit of meat we put in the store-room."

"Suppose the steamer works loose while we are on shore?" suggested Dick.

"Oh, we'll manage that easy enough," said Ned.

"We'll make our hawser fast to a tree below the shoal, then if she does work off she'll be brought up with a round turn."

It took time to do this.

Ned bossed the job, and Dick and the Unknown helped. Edith, meanwhile, went back in the woods in search of game.

Twice they heard her rifle crack before they had the hawser fixed the way they wanted it.

Then, as they started up the bank of a little creek, which ran down the mountain side emptying into the Yukon, they heard Edith's shout.

"Ned, Ned!" she called. "This way! This way! Come and see what I've found!"

"What is it?" Ned called back.

"Come and see! Come and see!"

They hurried into the woods, meeting Edith coming toward them, carrying a dirty looking mass which it was all she could lift.

"A strike!" cried Ned. "Hooray for you, Edith!"

"It's a big nugget," laughed Edith, "and there's lot's more of them up there in the creek."

But when they came up and got a better view of the nugget, the Unknown broke out into a laugh.

"You may as well throw that thing away, Edith," he said. "It weighs like thunder and ain't worth a cent."

"What in the world ails you, Zed? Ain't it gold?"

"Not much!"

"Why, it is! It certainly is. Ned, ain't it?"

"Indeed, it is, Edith," said Ned, taking it from her. "It's gold, but the trouble is it ain't the right kind."

"Fool's gold," laughed Dick. "Edith, will you never learn the difference?"

Now, Dick's remark was scarcely necessary.

Many a shrewder person than Edith has been deceived into mistaking the yellow sulphates of iron, or pyrites for the genuine stuff.

Iron pyrites occur in most places where gold is found and in many where not a trace of the precious metal is to be had.

It is quite a different shade of yellow and can be distinguished also from the fact that it is scattered through the quartz rock in minute crystals of very perfect form, whereas gold in quartz occurs in irregular masses and is always of a deeper yellow than this "fool's gold," as the pyrites are often called.

Still, pyrites often carry gold with them, but in too small quantities to make it profitable to work out.

Edith was greatly chagrined.

"I don't care," she said. "There's gold up there as well as this stuff. I'm sure of it. Come and see."

"Give me just a minute to see if the Comet is coming out of the cove and I'm with you!" said Ned.

He ran back to the shore and took a long look down the Yukon, but nothing could be seen of the missing steamer.

When he joined the others they were further up the creek, and Dick was down on his knees scraping up the sand from the bottom of a little pool into which the creek came tumbling over the rocks."

"There's a color here, Ned!" he exclaimed. "There's certainly a color!"

"I can see that right in your hand," replied Ned. "But what we want more than gold just now is grub. What did those shots of yours mean, Edith?"

"It meant a young moose for one thing and a brace of ducks for another," replied Edith. "They are right up the creek here."

"Zed, s'pose you and I start the dinner," said Ned. "Dick can work away over the gold."

"Can't work it without a pan and a shovel," said Dick. "Those are on the steamer and I'll go get them if you say so."

"You may as well see the thing through, now you've begun it," Ned replied.

He tried washing out a few handfuls of dirt himself.

In each instance there was gold left behind in his hand after he had washed the dirt away.

"Yes, it's worth looking into," he said. "Well, you and Edith stick to it and we'll go for the dinner."

So Dick pulled back to the steamer and returned with the pan and shovel.

Ned and the detective left him to work away with Edith, while they skinned the moose and picked the ducks, after which they built a fire and started the cooking.

Now, of course, this could have been better done aboard the Edith, but Young Klondike and his friends had become so accustomed to camp cooking that they greatly preferred it. It would have come hard with



all of them to be obliged to get down to the ways of civilization again.

When the roast was well under way the detective went down to the shore to have a look, and Ned strolled over to the creek.

"Well, how's the diggings?" he called out, as he drew near.

"Fair, fair," replied Dick, who was industriously panning.

"And not fool's gold, either!" cried Edith. "You don't catch me again in that mistake."

"Where's your dust? I don't see any."

"S'pose you raise that canvas," said Edith.

There was a piece of canvas lying right behind them, and Ned picked it up.

"By thunder! You have struck it rich!" he exclaimed.

It was a genuine surprise.

There lay a pile of coarse flake gold and small nuggets, worth fully five thousand dollars, for a guess.

"This hole is a splendid pocket!" said Edith. "I believe we could keep right on taking it out here for a week."

Ned lent a hand, and after a little the Unknown took hold for a while.

Fully eight thousand dollars was panned out before the roast was done.

"We'll mark this place and come back here again," said Ned. "I'll locate the whole island as soon as we return to Dawson City."

It was a great hour's work and no mistake, although in comparison with others Young Klondike had made, this might be termed a small find.

By the time dinner was over, the short day had ended and night came on.

The remainder of the moose was carried down to the shore, and then they brought the gold down and loaded it into the boat.

"Do you think she's worked down any, Ned?" asked the Unknown, looking off at the Edith.

"She certainly has," replied Ned. "You can see yourself how much slacker the hawser is. It's only a question of time when she'll work off altogether. I expect to be afloat by morning all right."

They were just getting ready to pull off to the steamer, when a light appeared in the distance out in the middle of the Yukon, fully two miles away.

"A steamer!" cried the detective. "Ye gods and little fishes! What if it should be the Gold Queen?"

They watched the light.

Suddenly another appeared and then another.

It was certainly a steamer.

This meant that it must be either the Gold Queen or the Comet, for it was extremely improbable that any other steamer had started down from Dawson City since they left.

"We must pull out and see what that means," declared Ned. "Let's hurry the gold on board the Edith and then pull up the river and head them off."

A little later they started away from the steamer.

There were two rifles for each, and revolvers and knives in plenty.

Ned had provided an abundance of fire-arms before leaving Dawson, hiding them in the gold room where they were now found undisturbed.

By this time the steamer's whole outline could be distinctly discerned.

She was a clumsy craft, setting low in the water.

As the boat drew nearer, Young Klondike's suspicions were fully confirmed, as he thought.

"That's not the Comet," he declared. "It's certainly the Gold Queen!"

## CHAPTER XI.

### WHERE IS THE GOLD QUEEN?

"LOOK, Ned! Look!"

"What now, Dick? I don't see anything different from what has been."

"Don't you see that reflection on the trees over on the other shore?"

"Well, yes; now that you speak of it, I do."

"Reflection of the steamer's lights, ain't it?" said Edith.

"Of a steamer's lights, but not the Gold Queen's," the Unknown declared.

"A steamer in some cove over there?" asked Ned.

"That's what," said Dick.

"You bet your life," added the Unknown. "I'll stake my last dollar on it that Dick is right."

"Then it's the Comet, sure!" said Ned, excitedly. "She's laying for the other steamer. Oh, if we could only get in ahead!"

"I think we can," said the Unknown. "We shall be up to that cove and past it in a few moments; if we keep the boat a-going as are going now, we are dead sure to get in ahead."

"I wish there was a chance for me to help," said Edith.

"There ain't! Dick and I can pull just as good a stroke as if you and Zed each had an oar. Keep a sharp lookout. We may have to signal the Gold Queen in a minute. I'm for doing that the instant you see that light move."

On they flew, every stroke shortening the distance between the boat and the steamer perceptibly, for, as they pulled, the big craft came bearing down upon the boat with far greater speed.

They passed the point where the reflected light was seen.

Suddenly Ned perceived that it was moving.

"Fire a shot, Edith!" he cried. "They're on the move now. Zed, be ready to start your blue light if that don't do."

They had brought out several blue lights from the Edith, which Ned had taken care to provide the steamer with in case any accident should occur, and these bid fair to come in very handy now.

As the shot rang out over the Yukon they could



see dark figures hurrying about on the steamer's deck.

But the shot was not returned, and there was nothing to show that the signal had been understood.

"Is your light over there still moving, dear boy?" asked the detective, after a moment.

"That's just what it's doing," replied Ned; "look and see for yourself!"

"Seems to me that it is."

"Watch the side of the mountain!" cried Dick.

"I can see the light move," said Edith, "but it goes slowly."

"They are working their way out of the cove," replied Ned. "Probably there are a good many windings. Now the light is gone altogether."

"Right you are! They've got in behind a hill!" cried the detective; "what's the matter with this being a good time to start my light?"

"Just the very time, I should say."

"And I agree. Here she goes!"

The Unknown stood his blue light in a tin pan and touched it off.

Of course it made the boat and its occupants stand out with perfect distinctness.

Edith threw up her rifle and fired another shot.

It immediately became evident that all this had fully aroused the attention of those on board the steamer.

They could see the dark figures crowding to the bows, and after a moment a rifle rang out.

Edith answered by another shot.

Then the steamer turned slightly and changed her course so as to run nearer the boat.

Soon they were within hailing distance and well past the entrance to the cove, where the shadow of the light had become visible again.

"Steamer ahoy! Hello! Hello!" roared the Unknown.

"Ahoy the boat! Ahoy! What do you want?" came from the steamer's deck.

"Who are you?"

"Come and find out!" was the singular answer borne toward them on the still night air.

The steamer had stopped; the men were still crowded together at the bow, looking off toward the boat.

"Upon my word I don't like the looks of things here," said the Unknown. "Young Klondike, are you dead sure that's the Gold Queen?"

"I'm beginning to feel pretty dead sure it isn't," said Dick.

Ned was straining his eyes toward the steamer.

"It's the Comet!" he cried, suddenly. "It's the Comet, and she's been up our cove and taken the whole crowd of gold pirates aboard."

"Hello there! Hello!" shouted a man, leaning over the steamer's bow. "Come aboard here. We'll take good care of you!"

"It's that scoundrel Noakes!" cried the Unknown, the blue light flashing in the fellow's face.

Instantly the detective pitched the light overboard, and the boat was in darkness.

"Back to the Edith, boys!" he exclaimed. "Pull! pull for your lives!"

If ever Ned Golden and Dick Luckey hustled, it was in the moments which followed this startling discovery.

They had been seen and what was more they had been recognized.

Shot after shot came flying after them over the water.

The Unknown was in favor of having Edith return fire, but Ned would not have it so.

"It won't do any good," he declared; "what we want to do is to get over under the shadow of the island and then make for the Edith just as fast as we can."

For a few moments the gold pirates seemed inclined to follow them. But the Comet was a good sized steamer and drew considerable water.

Over against the island the river was full of rocks and shoals, and this favored Young Klondike.

He soon had the boat in among the bowlders, where the pirates could not follow him without risking their steamer.

Jack Noakes saw this and tried to return to the main channel, all of which maneuvering was being closely watched by Ned and the others in the boat, you may be very sure.

"They'll be aground in a moment if they ain't careful," said Edith. "Oh, wouldn't I like to see them get stuck here among the rocks!"

The words were scarcely spoken when they saw the Comet suddenly keel over and a great shout went up from her deck.

"Stuck! Stuck!" cried the Unknown. "This gives us just the chance we want!"

"We want the Gold Queen!" cried Edith.

"How about the Edith?" asked Dick. "She's in just as much danger as the other steamer. We want to look after our own."

"Not much! When I set out to do a thing I like to do it," declared Ned. "We've started in to save the Gold Queen, and now is our chance to finish the job."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, that's business!" cried the detective. "Young Klondike forever! I like to see a fellow stick to his principles. We'll cut across the river and save the Gold Queen."

They left the gold pirates trying to get their steamer off. They could hear their shouts and see them running this way and that about the deck, as they dodged around a little island and then shot across the river.

For if this steamer was the Comet then the other must be the Gold Queen, although Ned could not understand why she should have gone into the cove.

As they pulled on, the reflected light on the hillside was no longer visible.

Where was the Gold Queen?



At last they struck into a deep cove, which Ned declared was the one where they had seen the light.

Whether this was so or not it was hard to tell.

Certainly neither the Gold Queen nor any other steamer was there now.

But the Comet had managed to free herself, and was now steaming across the river after them.

Fatigued with their long pull, the boys lay back on their oars half in despair.

"What in thunder are we going to do now?" cried Young Klondike. "If we attempt to cut across the river and get back to the Edith, they'll capture us as sure as fate!"

And Ned thought of the gold in the secret room.

It represented months of weary work.

Was it destined to fall into the hands of the gold pirates of the Yukon River?

It looked very much that way.

## CHAPTER XII.

### HOW THE EDITH WON THE DAY.

MATTERS were now in rather a serious condition.

Ned began to think that it would have been far better if he had taken Dick's advice and returned to the Edith in the first place, for it was perfectly evident that they would have to do it now.

"They are heading right for this cove," said the detective after they had watched the steamer a few moments.

"Then they must think the same as we did, that the Gold Queen is here," Ned replied.

"I'll bet you what you like we've got the wrong cove," said Dick. "We've struck up too high."

"Or else the light we saw reflected on the mountain wasn't from the steamer at all," Edith suggested.

"If she would only run aground again. Oh, ye gods and little fishes! if she'd only run aground again!" the Unknown kept saying.

Ned and Dick had begun pulling again, meanwhile.

They were working the boat across the channel at the mouth of the cove.

Ned's idea was to get in behind the Comet this time and so to return across the river and get back to the Edith, which as yet the gold pirates did not seem to have seen.

And there was a reason for this.

Ned had carefully extinguished all lights before leaving the steamer.

This was as sensible a thing as he ever did, otherwise the Edith would surely have been discovered before this, and matters made worse than they were as it was.

As they pulled on the Unknown stopped talking, and pulling out a fishing line which he had brought along when they first started from Dawson City with the idea of doing a little fishing, threw it over the side.

"What in the world are you up to, Zed?" asked Edith. "Are you going fishing here right in the middle of all this fuss?"

"That's what."

"Just like you. What are you fishing for?"

"Fishing for fools."

"You'd better throw your line inside the boat then," laughed Ned. "I don't believe there's any bigger fools going than you can get right here?"

"Perhaps I'm the biggest of the lot myself," said the Unknown, pulling up his line and measuring it off.

"What you driving at?" asked Dick.

"Three feet," said the Unknown, gravely, and over went the line with its heavy sinker again.

"You're up to some trick, Zed," said Edith.

"Two and a half!" said the detective, pulling up the line again. "Ned, my dear boy, steer for that big boulder and do just as I tell you, and we'll have these infernal gold pirates where the hair is short in two shakes of a ram's tail."

Down went the line again, and when it came up, the Unknown said "two feet."

By this time the Comet was close upon them, and the boat was very close to the boulder.

"I see what you're driving at. You are going to run them aground!" cried Ned.

"You bet!"

"Can you do it?"

"You bet!"

"I see the light on the mountain again!" said Edith, suddenly pointing up the cove.

She had scarcely spoken when the light at the Comet's bow was extinguished.

Then the stern light went out, and one after another followed, until every light on board was gone, and they could scarcely make out the steamer at all.

But the reflected light against the mountain grew more distinct.

"I see how it is," exclaimed Ned. "This cove runs away in among the mountains same as all the rest of them. Jack Noakes' gang know it, and they know that the Gold Queen has gone away up to the other end of it."

"Why, yes!" cried Edith. "I'll tell you what it is, Ned, it's the Sandy Bar diggings that lie up at the head of the cove; they've been up there to collect the gold of the claim owners, and take it down to St. Michaels—that's what it all means!"

Now, that this explanation had occurred to Edith, all saw that she must be right.

They had heard of the famous Sandy Bar diggings times enough, and all knew that they lay back from the Yukon somewhere near this very part of the river.

"Edith is right. I might have thought of it before," said the detective. "That's it. Noakes knows the steamer is coming; he's put out his lights to lay for her; he expects to go up the channel and make his capture, but I'll bet a new hat against my old one, that he won't do anything of the sort; but here we are behind the boulder. Whoa, January! Stop her!"



Two feet will do the business and more than do it, so don't you forget it. Now, see the old man work the rifle. Keep your ears open, Edith, and hear those fellows swear."

They knew the Unknown too well to ask any questions.

When the detective undertook to work out one of his peculiar schemes, he wanted no talk.

"Hold the boat right here. I'm going on top of the boulder," he said.

It was a dangerous undertaking to climb out on the slippery rock, and Ned fully expected to see the little detective take a sudden bath in the Yukon, tall hat, big boots and all.

But the Unknown had no such idea. He managed to get on top of the rock all right.

"Now my tin pan and another blue light," he said.

Ned passed them up.

All saw what the detective was driving at now, and they could only hope that it would prove successful.

The Unknown never said a word.

Preparing his blue light he waited until the Comet was reasonably near and then touched it off.

"Help! Help!" he shouted. "Take me off of here!"

Of course he attracted immediate attention on board the Comet.

Jack Noakes himself answered the hail.

"Where's your boat? Where's Young Klondike and the rest of them?" he called out.

"Drowned!" answered the Unknown, as coolly as if it had been the truth. "The boat swamped and I'm the only one saved. Come and take me off and I'll tell you where the Edith is, and give up all Young Klondike's gold."

Jack Noakes swallowed the bait, hook and all.

It must be remembered that very little is known of the Yukon River.

There are no skilled pilots who are acquainted with every rock and shoal.

As Jack Noakes had never happened to run aground before this night during his piratical expeditions up and down the Yukon he did not appreciate his danger, and they heard him give the order to run the Comet over to the rock, something which Captain Collamore would never have done, for he knew the dangers of this channel—which Noakes did not know at all.

Peering out from behind the boulder the boys saw the steamer come.

"Three feet! Two and a half! Two feet!" said the Unknown, solemnly, and then all at once he kicked the blue light into the water, for a shout from the steamer's deck told them that the business was done.

The Comet was aground hard and fast, and while the gold pirates were swearing at their ill luck, Young Klondike's party pulled away across the Yukon once more.

As they retreated they watched the Comet the

best they could, for no light now burned to show them just how she lay.

Still they could distinguish her outline under the stars and were satisfied that she had not moved since they left her.

Meanwhile, the reflection of the light could still be seen on the mountain side.

It was evident that the Gold Queen was slowly working her way up the cove.

"She's got to pass right by them, and they'll take her sure," said Ned. "Oh, if we could only do something to help them. It does seem a shame that those rascally pirates should gobble up all that gold."

"That's what's the matter, but with the Edith aground what can we do?" answered Dick.

"Live in hope!" cried the Unknown. "Keep on a-hustling; if we had given up before we wouldn't have been this far on the road to glory, and I bet you what you like we'll be able to down them yet."

Now, there is nothing like being hopeful, and the Unknown certainly was one of the most hopeful men alive.

As Ned and Dick were getting decidedly tired, he and Edith lent a hand at the oars.

It was easier pulling down the Yukon than against the current of that mighty river, and they made short time back to where the Edith lay.

"Hooray! She's off!" cried Young Klondike, as the boat shot in between the steamer and the island.

Sure enough, the Edith had worked herself free, and there she was tugging at the hawser, threatening to break it any instant.

"By gracious, we can down 'em now," cried Ned. "Get aboard! Get aboard! We'll show them how the Edith's gun can talk. I'm not going to rest until we've captured the Comet and run every one of the gold pirates into Dawson City, and I believe we can do it, too."

Everything on board the steamer was as they had left it.

Ned's first act was to release Mr. Pod Dunbury.

That rascally schemer came out of the state-room sour and sullen.

"What are you going to do with me now, Young Klondike?" he asked. "I thought you'd gone off and left the Edith for good."

"I'm going to put you back in your engine-room and make you run your engine," replied Ned. "Think you can mind your bells if I try you again?"

"Well, now, I'd rather do anything than be tied up in there."

"Do that and I'll see that this little slip is not laid up against you, my friend; what's more, I'll give you a hundred dollars when we part company to help start you out in the world as an honest man again."

"Will you do that, Young Klondike?"

"Yes, I will."

"You're white clean through. I mistrust that something is going to happen though. You've seen the rest of the boys and you're after them—that's what."



"Never you mind that. You stick to me and I'll stick to you. Is it a go?"

"Yes."

"Now mind your eye. If you attempt to go back on us you will be promptly shot."

It was well enough to have an ally in the engine-room, and Ned felt that he could depend upon Pod Dunbury to a certain extent.

The Unknown then went into the wheel-house and Dick and Ned put off in the boat, and cast off the hawser.

They had to hustle to get back on board again, for the current was very strong here and the Unknown most awfully afraid of getting aground again.

Once aboard the Edith was started, her namesake undertaking to guard the engine-room door in case Mr. Pod Dunbury should take it into his head to leave.

"We'll look after the cannon, Zed, and get everything in shape," Young Klondike declared. "Steer right across to the cove and keep out of sight of the gold pirates if it's a possible thing."

Now the Edith's cannon was quite an institution.

It had been purchased at Fort Cudahy for the express purpose of defending the steamer against the gold pirates, to which use it seemed likely to be put now.

Ned had fired it twice when it first came into Beacraft's yard at Dawson City and consequently felt somewhat acquainted with it.

Ned's first care was to ascertain whether the big gun had been interfered with by the gold pirates.

To his great satisfaction, he found that it had not.

He accordingly loaded up, and placed his powder and cannon balls so that a second charge could be brought into use without a moment's delay.

All this being accomplished, the boys went forward to the wheel-house.

"Everything working well, Zed?" Young Klondike asked.

"Fine as a fiddle. How is the cannon?"

"The cannon is all right. Couldn't ask for any better show than we've got now."

"That's the way it looks. I told you not to give up hope. There's one thing, though—we've got to make a clean finish of this business."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that the pirates and the pirate craft must be wiped off the Yukon forever. I say let's blow the Comet to smithereens if we can't bring it about any other way."

"Just what I've made up my mind to do," replied Ned, "and I think we'd better let Edith do the blowing. Any one of us can watch Pod Dunbury, but it takes Edith to fire a gun, big or little, so as to get the best results."

"You're right there! Ain't that the Comet now?"

They had passed almost across the Yukon coming up to the other shore, at a point somewhat below the cove.

"I think that's the steamer," replied Ned, peering forward; "yes, I'm sure it is."

"And she don't seem to have changed her position, either."

"No; as near as I can make out she hasn't, but you must remember we see her different away down here."

"She's in the same place exactly," said Dick. "I'm sure of it, and when we get closer you'll see that I'm right."

"I see it now. She hasn't changed her place a bit."

"That's all right for us, then, she's still aground," said Ned.

"Call up Edith, and ask her to right her gun; better let her decide what she can do before we bring our boat up where they can hear us," the detective said.

"Hold on! They are moving!" Dick suddenly exclaimed.

"No, sir! You don't see it," said the detective.

"No; but I hear it, and so do you."

"Wrong," said Ned. "It's the Gold Queen coming out of the cove."

"That's what it is," said the detective. "No doubt the pirates see her and are ready for business. That means hustle. By the Jumping Jeremiah, I'd die of shame if we were to miss our mark now."

"Which we won't! I'll get Edith right up!" exclaimed Ned.

He hurried below and returned, bringing Edith with him.

Pod Dunbury was attending to his duties all right, and there really seemed to be no necessity of keeping guard.

Edith sighted the gun, and declared they would have to work up further, which they did.

They were now within a short distance of the Comet, and occupied a very favorable position, being partly concealed by a point of land.

"Perhaps we've been seen, and perhaps we haven't," declared the detective; "really, I don't think it makes much difference. There they are all hard and fast, so what the deuce can they do against us even if they try?"

"The Gold Queen is coming," said Dick. "We'll see the fun in a minute."

The rattle of the steamer's paddle could be very distinctly heard up the cove.

The Gold Queen was a lumbering old affair, and would have fallen an easy prey to the Comet, if the pirate craft had been able to move.

Ned was curious to see how the river thieves meant to work it under the circumstances.

His curiosity was gratified a moment later.

Peering ahead they saw the gold pirates lowering their boats.

"Boarders, eh? As sure as my name isn't John Robinson they don't see us!" the Unknown exclaimed.

"What makes you so sure?" asked Edith.

"Why, my dear, don't they all know about our little barker? If they see us don't they expect us to



use it? Don't they know that all we've got to do is to touch her off and blow them galleywest?"

"I guess you are right," said Ned. "But here comes the Gold Queen, so now we'll know all about it."

The critical moment had come at last.

All oblivious of the presence of the boats, the Gold Queen swung out of the cove.

Instantly a shot was fired.

"You want to slow down there, cap! We've got business with you!" Jack Noakes sung out.

"Who are you and what do you want?" came the answer from the deck of the Gold Queen.

"We are the Gold Hunters of the Yukon," was the answer. "We are coming aboard."

Ding-a-ling!

The Unknown sounded his bell and the Edith started then.

"Man the guns!" shouted the detective, as the Gold Queen hove to, her feeble crew overawed by the dread name of the pirate band, for the Gold Hunters of the Yukon were known and dreaded from Dawson City to the mouth of the river, and few could stand up against them.

Once the Edith started she made short work of the distance between the point and the boats, which were now being rapidly pulled toward the Gold Queen.

"Now, Edith! Give 'em a shot!" cried Ned; "blow the boats from under them—that's the way to bring 'em to terms!"

Edith promptly obeyed.

The cannon's boom was the first warning the gold pirates had of their danger.

The next Jack Noakes knew, the boat in which he had fancied himself so safe was blown into kindling wood, and he and his companions were floundering in the water.

"Help us capture them, Captain Henderson!" bawled the Unknown. "Put out your boats and get the snoozers! We'll do the rest."

Boom, boom, boom, boom!

Four times the Edith's gun spoke, fired by the brave girl for whom the steamer was named.

Each shot took a boat, and as there were only four, and four from four leaves nothing, the pirates soon found themselves in a pretty bad plight.

The long and short of it was every man among them found himself forced to swim for it.

Some swam ashore, and some were captured by the Gold Queen's crew, who put out in boats after them. A few swam back to the Comet to be captured later, and three came aboard the Edith, which was soon up alongside the Gold Queen, and promptly surrendered to the boys.

So the battle ended, for those who remained on board the Comet gave right up.

"But," said Captain Henderson, when Ned went aboard the Gold Queen, "they'd have captured us, sure, if it hadn't been for your help, Young Klondike. We were just on the point of surrendering when we heard your shot."

This ended Young Klondike's chase.

The steamers lay by until morning, for Ned decided, now that the pirate band was broken up, that it would be best not to run the Edith down to St. Michaels after all.

So the gold in the secret room was put in charge of Captain Henderson and transferred to the Gold Queen.

The pirates were all locked up in the state-rooms of the Comet, which was taken in tow by the Edith.

With John Smith and Pod Dunbury to assist them, Ned and his friends ran back to Dawson City and turned the gang over to the Canadian Government, who sent them down into the Mackenzie River country, where they were made to do government work and forbidden to return to the Klondike on pain of death.

Having abandoned their trip to the mouth of the Yukon, Ned, Dick, Edith and the Unknown turned their attention to gold hunting again, and the adventures they now met with will be described in the next story of this series, which in many respects is the most interesting of all.

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